SUGGESTIONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

RELATIVE TO

HUMAN PERFECTION AND HAPPINESS.

DIDACTIC LECTURES.

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SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL AND MOST USUAL FAULTS IN EDUCATION.

THE education of children, the formation of their mind and their heart, is undoubtedly the moſt important, but likewiſe the moſt arduous concern of parents. When we reflect how much depends on the firſt impreſſions that are made on the human mind; how deep they ſink, and how difficult it is to efface them afterwards; when we conſider how ſtrong

and almoſt invincible the authority of prejudice and cuſtom is, and how much trouble it coſts us to forſake the way we have often trod, on which we have found many comforts and ſatisfactions, and which we have long taken for the ſafeſt and the beſt: we muſt eaſily perceive of what infinite moment it is, whether we imbibe good or bad, true or falſe principles and rules of conduct in our earlieſt infancy, whether the goods and advantages of this world are repreſented to us in this manner or in that, whether we are imbued with groveling or generous ſentiments, whether virtue and piety are inſtilled into us, or whether our appetites are directed to vice and to the contempt of God and Chriſt. On theſe matters all depends. According to the one or the other have we more or fewer difficulties to conquer on the way of virtue; and accordingly will it be eaſier or harder for us to reach the end of our deſtination, and to be happy. Conſequently, how important muſt theſe conſiderations be in the

education

education of children! But, on the other hand, how arduous this undertaking! When we revolve in our minds how much attention, underſtanding, care, patience and perſeverence are requiſite thereto, and how much pains it demands, to oppoſe the current of general, but not therefore the leſs hurtful manners and cuſtoms; when we weigh, how various the natural capacities are, the propenſities and characters of mankind, how eaſily we may run into extremes either on one or on the other ſide, by being too ſevere or too mild, and how often we begin to feel weary and diſguſted with our troubles, from the uncertainty of ever reaping the wiſhed-for fruit of it: we muſt ſoon find, that this toil preſuppoſes conſiderable powers, and is attended with many difficulties. However, the more certain it is, that the education of children is an extremely important and an extremely difficult buſineſs, ſo much the more reaſon had the apoſtle to

exhort chriſtians to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and ſo much the leſs will you be diſſatisfied with me, if I diſcourſe to you to-day on a duty of ſuch univerſal obligation, which is ſo ſeldom attended to with due care, and yet on the obſervance whereof the welfare of thoſe that are the deareſt to us in a great meaſure depends. But, as the ſubject is too copious to be treated of at once in its full extent, I ſhall do no more at preſent than warn you of ſome of the principal and moſt uſual faults in the education of children. Do thou, O God, thyſelf diſpoſe the hearts of theſe my hearers to a ready acceptance of theſe ſuggeſtions, and excite them to the faithful application of them. Diſperſe, by the light of thy truth, the prejudices that may have hitherto ſtood in their way; and let the fruit of this diſcourſe be manifeſted in the virtuous conduct of the children thou haſt entruſted to them!

The firſt fault I obſerve in the education of children is this, that ſenſuality is allowed to gain the aſcendency over them, and that this ſource of moral corruption is not ſufficiently checked. The Creator has doubtleſs given us the ſenſes in wiſe and good deſigns. They are the means whereby we acquire our firſt conceptions and ideas. They ſupply our reaſon with matter for thought and conſideration. They warn us of what is pernicious, what may hurt our body, impair our health, and deſtroy our life. They are inſtruments by which the Author of our nature has made us ſuſceptible of various pleaſure; and we ſhould act in oppoſition to his will, if we ſhould entirely deprive ourſelves of this pleaſure, or hold it to be abſolutely ſinful. By means of the images of outward things we acquire by the ſenſes, ſenſations are produced in us, which in many caſes are able of themſelves alone, to give the needful vigour to our reſolves, and to

guard us from the detriment which cold and tedious conſideration in limited creatures like us might occaſion; ſenſations that impell us in an irreſiſtible manner to many actions, which we ſhould either totally neglect, or which we ſhould not perform with due promptitude and ſpirit, were we barely directed by the deciſion of reaſon. But, uſeful and neceſſary as ſenſible repreſentations and feelings are in all theſe reſpects; no leſs baleful is the influence they have on our character and our conduct, if we depend too much upon them, if we allow them to command and govern us. This however happens when we judge of the nature and value of outward things merely by the impreſſion they make on our ſenſes; when we ſo far addict ourſelves to ſenſual pleaſures, and thereby ſtrengthen our natural abhorrence to whatever is unpleaſant and painful, that we cannot deny ourſelves the former without extreme uneaſineſs, nor ſubmit to the

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latter without many inward ſtruggles or much outward violence; that we always, or generally at leaſt, prefer a preſent pleaſure to a future, though the future one be much greater and more laſting than the preſent; and that we are more careful to avoid a trifling preſent evil, than by a voluntary endurance of it to be exempted from a future one that is much more conſiderable and much more laſting. In him that is ſo minded, ſenſuality has the upper hand. But how fertile in bad effects! Is it not ſenſuality that deprives the ſoul of its vigour, degrades it to a lower rank of creatures, and teaches a man to think and act as if he was wholly fleſh? Is it not ſenſuality, which, while it directs all his thoughts and appetites to the preſent alone, deprives him at the ſame time of all deſire and capacity for employment about ſpiritual and heavenly objects, from mounting upwards to the inviſible God, and for providing for the future world according

to

to his vocation? Is it not ſenſuality that inſpires the generality of men with an inſurmountable abhorrence for every thing that is called labour and pains, that requires a particular exertion of the powers of the mind, or a painful oppoſition to our cupidity, and thus hinders them from being any thing more in virtue and piety than feeble beginners? Is it not ſenſuality that, for the ſame reaſon, renders it ſo difficult, nay, impoſſible for them to prefer the general advantage to their own private benefit, to ſacrifice any pleaſures and conveniencies to their duty and the happineſs of their brethren, and to enter upon ſuch affairs as are of the higheſt utility to ſociety, but unpleaſant and troubleſome in themſelves? In ſhort, is it not ſenſuality which makes them indiſpoſed to maintain the dignity of rational and immortal creatures, the dignity of true chriſtians, to form themſelves upon the model of holineſs the Saviour gave them, and to purſue

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ſuch a courſe as is conſiſtent with a citizen of heaven? But, in general, do men take the neceſſary pains for preventing theſe ſad effects of a predominant ſenſuality, by a careful and wiſe education of children, and thereby to eaſe them in the diſcharge of their duties? Do they ſtrive to keep their propenſity to ſenſual pleaſure within due bounds? Do men check the increaſe of it by the neceſſary warineſs and prudence? Do not men rather endeavour all they can to ſtrengthen this propenſity, and to aſſiſt it in gaining the aſcendency over reaſon? How, in general, are children incited to the obſervance of their duty, to induſtry and application? Is it not by promiſing them ſuch things as flatter their ſenſes, their palate, their ſight, &c.? How are they terrified from the commiſſion of this or that folly or fault? Is it not by threatening them with ſuch puniſhments as cauſe them bodily pain, or by depriving them of ſuch goods and advan-

tages as affect their ſenſes in the moſt agreeable manner? Are not thus all their thoughts, deſires, and views directed to ſenſible objects? Are they not thus accuſtomed to proceed in their determinations and actions merely by the ſenſual pleaſure or diſpleaſure they have to hope or to fear from it? And when they have thus thought, judged, and acted for ten, fifteen, or a greater number of years, how hard muſt it be for them during the reſt of their days, to conduct themſelves by other rules and upon other principles, and to oppoſe and put off habits that have ſtruck ſuch deep roots within them! How ſtrange muſt all that appear to them then which reaſon and religion tell us of temperance, of moderation, of ſelf-denial, and of ſubduing our inordinate appetites and luſts! How prompt they will be to pronounce all theſe to be extravagant demands, to be impoſſible attainments, and unneceſſary purſuits! Nay, how eaſily may they thence

be induced to reject religion and virtue themſelves, as directreſſes infinitely too auſtere, and to give themſelves up to the groſſeſt exceſſes! Lamentable proſpects for parents, who have ſtill preſerved ſome fear of God, and who have the welfare of their children at heart!

Would you preſerve your children from theſe deviations: then do your utmoſt to prevent ſenſuality from gaining the aſcendant in them. Strive to encourage them to obedience and duty more by rational repreſentations ſuited to their capacities of the influence their conduct muſt have on their future well-being, than by the preſent and viſible pleaſures of ſenſe. Early ſo form their minds that they may ſafely act accordingly. Teach them betimes to attend to the natural good and bad conſequences of their actions. Endeavour to inſpire them with a predominant love of order and truth. In regard to their food,

their

their apparel, their employment, and mode of life, avoid every thing that may adminiſter to indolence, effeminacy, and a too delicate ſenſibility. Shew them no particular tokens of compaſſion even when ſome ſlight miſhap befalls them, or if they ſuffer very tolerable pains, and treat theſe accidents and theſe pains as trifles undeſerving of attention. Set not too great a value on their childiſh joys. Accuſtom them by degrees to ſee ſuch things as are agreeable to them and are harmleſs in themſelves, to obſerve whatever is beautiful and excellent in them, and to diſcourſe of them with others, without any violent longings after them, or immoderate trouble at the want of them. But exerciſe them principally in this, to refrain at times from an allowable pleaſure, or abruptly to leave it, for the diſcharge of ſome higher duty, or the performance of ſome weightier buſineſs; and evince greater ſatisfaction at theſe proofs of rational obedience,

dience, than at all other demonſtrations of aſſiduity and addreſs. In theſe exerciſes conſiſts all real virtue during the preſent ſtate of diſcipline and trial; and it is impoſſible without them to arrive at any high degree of proficiency in it.

A ſecond fault, no leſs noxious and common, in the education of children, is that pains are taken to cheriſh their pride, inſtead of repreſſing it, and inſtead of giving them modeſt and humble ſentiments of themſelves. There is no vice that more early or more eaſily takes poſſeſſion of the human heart than pride; and yet there is no vice more unbecoming us, feeble, neceſſitous, and ſinful creatures, none that keeps us at a greater diſtance from the kingdom of heaven, and leads us into more perilous by-paths than this. We are naturally but too much diſpoſed, to account ourſelves far greater and better than we actually are. If this diſpoſition be

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ſtrengthened and encouraged in our younger years, it ſoon ſo captivates and binds us, that afterwards we may very often labour in vain to free ourſelves from its tyrannical ſway. It has the art of dazzling us in ſuch a manner, that we do not ſee our own faults and infirmities, and therefore neither do we ever ſet ſeriouſly about correcting them. It makes us deaf to the admonitions and ſuggeſtions of our teachers, our friends, nay and even of our own conſcience. It prevents us on important occaſions from ſeeking information, counſel and aſſiſtance from others, as we aſcribe more wiſdom, prudence, and force to ourſelves than we in fact poſſeſs. We then deſpiſe the temptations to evil, and are plunged into them, before we are able to take the due precautions againſt them. We give ourſelves little or no trouble about improving in knowledge and virtue, as we imagine we have already brought ourſelves to a very great degree of perfection

tion in them. We find, in ſhort, a thouſand difficulties in the precepts of chriſtianity, as they are at variance with our lofty imagination and our ſinful paſſions; and the terms whereon we are offered grace and bliſs by the goſpel, are very diſagreeable to us, as they contradict our pride. Can we then ever be too early or too earneſt in grabbling with this foe to our perfection and happineſs? Can we ever be too careful in denying it admiſſion to the hearts of children? But is this indeed always done? Do men endeavour to inſpire them with modeſt and humble opinions of themſelves? No! On the contrary, in general they neglect nothing that can beget and nouriſh in them ſelf-conceit. They are taught to have high notions of their beauty, or of their illuſtrious deſcent, or of other inconſiderable advantages. Every proper anſwer they give is held up for admiration, the laughable trick by which they amuſe us is pronounced to be a won-

derful token of peculiar acuteneſs of mind. Theſe ambiguous proofs of their wit are repeated in their preſence, and all contribute to ſwell the panegyric which they have not deſerved. Every inſtance of induſtry or obedience is attributed to them as a peculiar merit; while nothing more ſhould be done than aſſuring them that in this reſpect they have fulfilled their duty, and thus attended to their own advantage. Some people require their children to be ſhewn almoſt the ſame tokens of reverence as are due to perſons advanced in life, and even pretend to be affronted when they are treated as children by others. So much intereſt is taken in all that concerns them, in ſupplying their wants before they are felt, in gratifying their wiſhes the inſtant they are formed, that they muſt of neceſſity imagine themſelves important members of human ſociety, and inveſted with a diſtinguiſhed ſtation in it. On the other hand, all their follies and

faults

faults are readily excuſed, even though they proceed from premeditated malice. All is attributed to childiſh playfulneſs, to the want of conſideration and attention; at leaſt they are excuſed to others on this ſcore, that children may be ſpared what is in fact a ſalutary ſhame and confuſion; and thus are they accuſtomed to prize above all things the empty praiſes of men, and to give themſelves more concern about the appearance than the eſſence of integrity and virtue. But who does not ſee that this nouriſhes pride in their hearts, and baniſhes true humility from it?

Would you guard your children from this vice ſo fruitful in pernicious effects, you whom God has made parents, guardians, and teachers; then often remind them of the feeble, neceſſitous, impotent and dependent condition they are in. Set no higher a value on their capacities and good qualities than they actually have.

Teach them to conſider all as the unmerited gift of the Moſt High, who never allows us to exalt ourſelves above others, but has made it our moſt indiſpenſable duty by all means to ſerve others and be uſeful to them. Commend them but ſeldom in their preſence, and never permit others to give them extravagant praiſe. Never over-look their faults and tranſgreſſions, and endeavour to bring them to a juſt ſenſe of moral corruption, which weakens the powers of the human ſoul, and diſturbs the order that ſubſiſts among men. Shew them upon all occaſions, how little cauſe they have to boaſt of their health, their beauty, their ſtrength, their talents, or their capacities, or to place much dependence on them; how ſoon they may loſe all theſe advantages; how far they are excelled by many others in all theſe reſpects; and how weak, how imperfect, how frail, how inſtable in general is the knowledge, the virtue, and the happineſs of mortals. Lead them at length

length into the ſchool of the Redeemer, inſtruct them in his condeſcending and magnanimous love to men; lay his humility and meekneſs before them, as the pattern for their imitation; and imprint it deeply on their tender hearts, that it is impoſſible to be a true chriſtian and to be happy, if we do not imitate and reſemble the Saviour, no leſs in theſe than in all the virtues. How much would theſe ſentiments facilitate to them the fulfilling of all the other duties of chriſtianity? What a mild and chearing light, what a genial glow would it diffuſe over all their good qualities and their actual merits, and how would they find themſelves thereby ſtimulated to diſregard thoſe things that are behind, and to be conſtantly ſtretching after higher degrees of perfection!

A third capital fault in the education of children is, that they are not taught rightly to judge of the privileges, pleaſures, and

buſineſſes of life. How various are the falſe ideas that are communicated to the infant mind of all theſe things; and how deſtructive the influence theſe errors afterwards have on the whole moral behaviour. Children are generally taught to look upon ſuperfluity, elevation, rank, authority, outward reſpect, as goods in themſelves deſerving of our higheſt eſteem, and which beſtow a real value on ſuch as poſſeſs them; as goods, the want or loſs whereof make men abſolutely wretched, and which conſequently are worthy of the greateſt endeavours to obtain, and with all poſſible induſtry to be preſerved. They are made too early attentive to the difference of ranks in human ſociety; their natural diſpoſition to behave them friendly, kind, and ſerviceable to all men, without reſpect of perſons, is thus repreſſed; they are forbidden to ſhew any ſort of familiarity to perſons of a leſs conſpicuous pedigree than theirs, but of good morals, or even

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to converſe with them; and they are inſpired by degrees, if not with a ſovereign contempt, yet certainly a great indifference and inſenſibility towards all who do not poſſeſs ſo great a fortune or ſuch outward privileges as they. Riches are deſcribed to them as far more deſirable than virtue, poverty and humility as more hideous than vice. The temporal advantages, the pleaſures and comforts they are in a few years to expect, are depicted to them in ſuch lively and charming colours, that they long for the enjoyment of them with the utmoſt ardency of deſire, and make them the ultimate object of all their wiſhes. And what ſort of inſtruction is generally given them on the ſubject of the deſtination or appointment of man, and of the buſineſs of life? A man muſt work, it is ſaid, to acquire food and raiment; he muſt keep a ſteady eye on his own advantage, and let no opportunity eſcape him unemployed for pro-

moting it; he muſt uſe all diligence to heap up treaſures, to raiſe himſelf from the duſt of depreſſion, and leave all thoſe who have the ſame object in view at a great diſtance behind him; he muſt abſolutely allow himſelf to be ſwayed by the received cuſtoms and manners, be they good or bad, reaſonable or unreaſonable, that he may not be reckoned an unſociable monſter, and thus be injurious to his own advancement; he muſt know how to live, that is, he muſt know how to be agreeable to every one by diſſimulation, flattery and falſehood, and to make himſelf beloved by every body, and to beware of ſpeaking what he thinks, or to judge as the nature of the caſe requires. Theſe are the principal leſſons generally infuſed into children as preparatory to their entrance on the world, and for rendering them dextrous in the management of their future affairs. No wonder, if, in the ſequel, dazzled by theſe prejudices, they adhere entirely

entirely to the earth, if they are actuated by the meaneſt and moſt ſordid ſelfiſhneſs, and are incapable of all generous and magnanimous actions. No wonder if they conform in all reſpects to the world, fall down the ſtream of prevailing corruption without oppoſition or reſiſtance, and ſatisfy themſelves with the empty applauſe, that they are neither murderers, robbers, nor profligates. No wonder if it never enter their minds to ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, if they never concern themſelves about the improvement and ſalvation of their immortal ſpirit, and ſo live as if after death they had nothing to hope or to fear.

Parents, would you that your children avoid the way of folly and vice, would you conduct them on the path of eternal wiſdom; then give them ſounder notions of the advantages, the pleaſures and the affairs of this life. Teach them to under-

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ſtand theſe objects in their peculiar relations to their preſent and future happineſs. Warn them of the deceitfulneſs of ſenſe, of the dazzling luſtre that ſurrounds the great ones of the earth, of the apparent happineſs which high ſtation and great riches promiſe their poſſeſſors. Shew them, that peace of mind and ſatisfaction of heart are very often to be found in the humble abodes of the poor, and but ſeldom in the ſplendid habitations and ſumptuous palaces of the great. Tell them, that it is neither rank, nor titles, nor authority, that deſerve our eſteem, but the right uſe of them; that only virtue and integrity, only the real merit of the man can do him honour, and give him actual precedence above others; and that the humbleſt day-labourer, who is faithful to his duties, is of infinitely more conſidera tion in the ſight of the Moſt High, than the crowned prince, who miſuſes his power to the oppreſſion of the guiltleſs. Tell them,

them, that only vice can degrade a human being; that God is as much the Creator and Father of the poor as of the rich; that we muſt conſider ourſelves all as brethren, and heartily love and ſerve each other as ſuch. Inform them how empty are all the delights of the world, how often the ſevereſt pain, the bittereſt remorſe, the crueleſt vexations, follow on the inordinate enjoyment of them; and how dreadfully they are deceived who ſeek their happineſs in them. Repreſent to them the buſineſs of this life, the diſcharge of the duties of their calling, not merely as means for procuring a livelihood, or acquiring ſuperfluity, and paſſing their days in eaſe, but as means for applying our talents and capacities to the ſervice of our fellow-creatures, and for contributing ſomewhat to the public good. Teach them to think generouſly and diſintereſtedly, and not to make their own particular advantage, ſo much as the well-being of the whole ſociety to which

which they belong, the ultimate aim of their endeavours. Make it often a matter of encouragement to them, that they have an immortal ſoul, capable of never-ending happineſs; that this earth is not the place where their vocation terminates; that God has formed them for eternity; that he has placed them here in a ſtate of exerciſe and trial, which they are to employ in preparing and fitting themſelves for the future life, and that this is infinitely the greateſt concern they have to mind. This way of thinking and judging will ſecure them from the path of corruption, and will render them wiſe to eternal felicity.

Laſtly, I obſerve as a fourth principal fault in the education of children, that men chuſe rather to inſtruct them by precept than by example. Precepts do not make by far ſo deep and permanent an impreſſion on them as example; and whenever this is wanting, the other is, for the moſt

moſt part, of no advantage. The cauſe of it is apparent. The ſenſes and the imagination are far more buſy in children than the underſtanding; and they are much more diſpoſed to imitate what they ſee and hear, than to inveſtigate the propriety or impropriety of it by painful reflection. Experience tells us, that very frequently the moſt excellent principles are not able to withſtand the force of bad example; and, on the other hand, that beautiful patterns of virtue and piety ſometimes amply ſupply a defect of inſtruction. But how often does it happen, that parents or tutors content themſelves with giving good rules of conduct to their children or pupils, without attending to their obſervance themſelves! Nay, how often does it happen, that they deprive their doctrines and precepts of all natural efficacy by purſuing a courſe at variance with them, and render religion and virtue themſelves ſuſpected and contemptible by ſuch a contradiction!

This

This is the chief cauſe that all their remonſtrances, cautions, admonitions, and corrections, are ſo often exhibited in vain. Their own example defeats their purpoſe; and they deprive themſelves of all the fruits of their labours.

Would you enjoy theſe delicious fruits, you to whom God has thus entruſted children: then demonſtrate the neceſſity, the propriety, the beauty of the virtues you recommend to their regard, by a ſtudious and conſtant diſplay of them. Would you that your children ſhould fear God and ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth: then let a real fear of God be perceptible in you. Never mention that Glorious Being without the profoundeſt veneration, beware of every abuſe of his ſacred name; frequent the exerciſes of public and private worſhip with undiſſembled devotion; aſcribe all the advantages you enjoy to the unmerited grace of the Moſt High, and adore all his ways

ways in humble ſubmiſſion. Would you that your children ſhould learn juſtice, equity, humanity, and liberality: then let them be the witneſſes that you endeavour with all your heart to fulfill theſe duties yourſelf. Condemn, without reſpect of perſons, every unjuſt, every unmerciful action; and place it in ſuch a light that it ſhall excite their averſion and abhorrence. Rejoice with them in every opportunity of doing good to others, and do not eaſily allow any indigent or afflicted perſon to go from you uncomforted or unrelieved. Would you that your children be temperate, chaſte, and modeſt: then be cloathed with theſe virtues yourſelf. Avoid every thing that is in the moſt diſtant degree offenſive to decorum in your words, your deportment and your actions, whatever may give occaſion to irregular thoughts and deſires. Exerciſe yourſelf in abſtinence, and ſhew them, that you can forego many things, which are yet pleaſant and agreeable, without

out being therefore uneaſy or unhappy. Would you teach your children gentleneſs and humility: then ſuffer not yourſelf to be tranſported by anger in their preſence, but govern your ſpirit. Never boaſt of your diſtinctions, and deſpiſe no man who does not render himſelf deſpicable by folly and vice. Act not too imperiouſly with thoſe who owe you obedience; and ſhew by your behaviour towards them, that you acknowledge them for your fellow-creatures, that you love them, and take an intereſt in their welfare. Forgive with your whole heart them that offend you, and take heed not to let any rancorous ſentiments appear. In fine, would you form your children to be citizens of heaven: then purſue yourſelf a heavenly courſe. Teſtify a generous diſdain for all that is tranſient and earthly. Frequently contraſt the preſent with the future. Look more to the inviſible than to the viſible, and ſo conſtitute your life, that all men may con-

clude from it; that you have nothing more at heart than to deliver your ſoul, and to arrive at bliſs.

Obſerve but this and the foregoing rules of conduct, and you will certainly no more fall into thoſe miſtakes of which you have been warned in the preſent diſcourſe. You will bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and the Lord will certainly not leave your endeavours unbleſt, if they be but conſtant and ſincere. He will hereafter beſtow on you the glorious reward he has promiſed to his faithful ſtewards and ſervants. And what a happineſs, what a tranſporting delight it will be to you, when you appear, undiſmayed, before the face of the Judge of the living and the dead, when you chearfully give him an account of the diſcharge of your truſt, and, ſurrounded by your family, can ſay to him: Lord, behold here am I, and the children thou committedſt to me.

OF FORMING THE MINDS OF CHILDREN.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Prov. xxii. 6.

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THE love of parents to their children being ſo natural and ſo forcible an inſtinct; that they often and readily ſacrifice their own happineſs to the happineſs of their children, and in ſome meaſure live more for them than they do for themſelves; it is matter of much ſurpriſe, that they do not take the education of them more to heart, or that they fall into

ſo many and ſuch great miſtakes in attending to it. Doubtleſs the reaſon of this lies not ſo much in the want of tenderneſs and affection, as in the falſe and incompetent ideas they form of education. This duty, for inſtance, is but too often made to conſiſt in providing for the life and the health of the children; in teaching them ſome mechanical works and arts; in loading their memory with a multitude of words which they do not underſtand; in inſtructing them in the rules of outward behaviour and the faſhionable tokens of civility; in warning them of the groſſer enormities which are followed by puniſhment and diſgrace; in diveſting them of their natural ſimplicity and openneſs of heart, and giving them in its ſtead reſerve, diſſimulation, and flattery; in communicating to them ſome notions, for the moſt part falſe, of the affairs, the pleaſures, and advantages of ſocial life; and in rendering them dextrous in ſome art

for gaining a livelihood, or for ſecuring their hereditary eſtates and maintaining their rank. In theſe reſpects the generality of parents are deficient neither in pains nor application to promote what they term the benefit of their children, and in fact, by this means, they contribute much to their welfare. May we not have reaſon to hope then that even this might be done in a ſtill more profitable manner if men had juſter conceptions of what belongs to education? It is this that has moved me to ſhew you, in ſeveral treatiſes, what is peculiarly requiſite in the education of children, and how we are to ſet about it. It principally conſiſts in the forming of their minds and their hearts, and in the beſt method of leading them to religion and to chriſtianity. To-day I ſhall confine myſelf to the firſt head, and diſcourſe of the forming of the mind of children in general, and without regard to religion and chriſtianity.

Probably the obſervations I think of making on this matter, may appear too dry and unentertaining to many. Probably others will deem them fitter for the lecture of a philoſophical than of a chriſtian teacher. The attentive hearer, with whom uſeful inſtruction is of more account than fleeting amuſement, will eaſily obviate the former of theſe charges; and the latter is founded altogether on a prejudice, to which we ſhall pay no reſpect if we rationally revere religion and virtue. Chriſtian faith and chriſtian virtue pre-ſuppoſe the moſt juſt and the beſt uſe of our natural capacities and powers. All that promotes and facilitates the latter, promotes and facilitates the former likewiſe; and certainly neither unbelief nor vice would commit ſuch ravages among mankind, if more pains had been beſtowed in their childhood and youth on the due forming of their mind and heart. We will therefore

paſs

paſs on to the ſubject itſelf without farther heſitation.

To form the underſtanding, or the mind of children, implies, to give them right notions of things, and to habituate them to ſuch a way of thinking and judging, as is conſonant to truth, and by which they may become wiſe. Man, by means of his mind, can repreſent to himſelf as well what paſſes within him, as what is and happens without him; he can judge of the nature of theſe things, aſſociate them, ſeparate them from each other, and as he can compare and contraſt them together, can collect new images which may be augmented without end. But his nature is not ſo conſtituted that he muſt neceſſarily figure to himſelf the objects he may know as they actually are, or ſo as that he cannot err in the judgment he paſſes on them, in the compariſon he makes between them, in the harmony or con-

contradiction he perceives among them. He may repreſent to himſelf all the things that ſurround him on ſeveral ſides, or only on one; he may ſhew them greater or leſs, better or worſe, more profitable or more detrimental than in fact they are. He can connect things together which do not belong to one another, and arbitrarily divide aſunder what were connected by an indiſſoluble tie; he can take one ſubject for the effect or for the cauſe of another, which has nothing at all in common with it; and the leſs he employs the powers of his underſtanding, the more negligently and careleſsly he has uſed them, the oftener muſt he fall into ſuch errors in thinking, in judging, and in determining. Of how great importance then muſt it be for him, at the time when he begins to exhibit and to uſe theſe powers, to be guided in the right application of them, to learn how moſt juſtly and properly to uſe them! And in this it is that the forming of the mind

mind in children conſiſts. They ſtand in need of a diſcreet and experienced guide on the way by which we attain to the knowledge of truth, who ſhall not only warn them of all the turnings and by-paths on it, and, as often as they inadvertently ſtrike into them, bring them back, but teach them alſo to avoid all labyrinths and mazes and to purſue their mark without interruption. Their underſtanding muſt not only be exerciſed in general, and ſtored with various kinds of knowledge; but it muſt likewiſe be ſo exerciſed as by degrees to acquire an aptitude to examine and judge by itſelf what it is deſirous of knowing, readily to diſtinguiſh the true from the falſe, and in theſe inveſtigations and judgments conſtantly to follow the ſafeſt rules, and to take the ſhorteſt way. However, this is not ſo well effected by inſtructing them in theſe rules of thinking, or by imprinting them on their memory, as by teaching them

them to obſerve on all occaſions whether and wherefore they have juſtly or unjuſtly reflected and determined; and by thinking, conſidering, inveſtigating, and remaining doubtful or decided, with them, in a ſociable and familiar manner proportionate to their age. By this means we make them gradually attentive to the operations of their own mind, and acquainted with the principles and rules upon which it proceeds, and teach them by their own experience to ſtudy the obſtructions which impede it in its operations, and the advantages which aſſiſt it in its courſe.

But I perceive my diſcourſe to be growing abſtruſe, by my continuing ſo long in generals. I will endeavour to render it more eaſy of comprehenſion, by calling your attention ſucceſſively to the different parts of this ſubject. The buſineſs of which I ſpeak is likewiſe very difficult; the beſt precepts are not ſufficient to encounter

counter all the obſtacles we meet with in it; and practice in this reſpect likewiſe, is, undoubtedly, the ableſt inſtructreſs. At the ſame time, I ſincerely believe, you may much facilitate this buſineſs to you, and labour ſucceſsfully in forming the minds of your children and pupils, if you take into conſideration the following rules.

The firſt is this: Suppreſs not their curioſity after novelty or after knowledge. It is of itſelf no fault. It is rather a ſtrong incitement and an excellent means to become ſenſible and wiſe. It is commonly the voice of ignorance, or pride, or indolence, or a peeviſh temper that authoritatively impoſes ſilence on a poor child, inquiſitive after ſomething it does not know, and is not ſatisfied with the firſt anſwer it receives; it is cruelty to add inſult to contempt, and to reproach it with indecent and criminal officiouſneſs. Indeed children muſt learn and practiſe modeſty,

deſty, and this particularly when they are in the company of ſtrangers, who are not preſent on their account, but on that of their parents. But their parents, their governours and teachers, will loſe the beſt opportunities for inſtructing them, if they conſtantly require them to be dumb in their preſence, and only to be ſilent hearers. No; it is their duty, and, if they love their children or their pupils, they will make it their pleaſure, not to anſwer their queſtions with a teſty Yes or No; but to anſwer them in ſuch a manner as ſhall amply inſtruct them in what they wanted to know, but at the ſame time give them pleaſure. Nay, they would eagerly ſeize on theſe opportunities for exerciſing the reflection of the child or the youth, and by deſigned queſtions to make them the diſcoverers of what they did not know before. And ſhould their queſtions be even of ſuch a nature that their parents or their preceptors cannot anſwer them, inſtead of being

being averſe to confeſs their own ignorance, or excuſing themſelves on the imperfection of human knowledge in general, or endeavouring to make it intelligible to the interrogator, that the anſwering of his queſtion preſuppoſes knowledge which he has not and cannot have yet, but which hereafter will amply requite his induſtry if he do but perſiſt in it.

A ſecond rule for forming the mind is this: Accuſtom your children or your pupils to the uſe of their ſenſes; teach them to feel juſtly. The impreſſion which outward things make on us by means of the ſenſes, and the ideas that thence ariſe in our mind, are the materials, as it were, which our mind works up, and on which, at length, is founded all the knowledge and ſcience of mankind. The more various, the more juſt, the more complete theſe ideas are, ſo much the more able is the mind to exerciſe itſelf in thought, and

and ſo much eaſier and ſurer can it ſoar aloft to ſublimer and more univerſal knowledge. But, as we acquire a knowledge of ſenſible things far better from the impreſſions their preſence makes upon us, than from any deſcriptions of them that can be given us in words; therefore let your children learn what they may ſee, hear, and feel themſelves, not barely from books or oral inſtruction; but ſhew it them actually, as ſoon and as often as you have an opportunity for it. In this manner let them ſee and obſerve the beauties of nature, the wonders of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, the various phænomena of the atmoſpere, the magnificence of the ſtarry heavens; and help them by degrees to ſeparate and reduce to order the multitude of obſcure ideas which from all ſides preſs upon their minds. But let them ſee all theſe things with their own eyes, and feel them in their own way; and weaken not the impreſſion they hence receive

receive by untimely and far-fetched explanations. Lead them into the habitation and the barns of the countryman, into the ſhops of the manufacturer and the artiſt; ſhew them there, how the various riches of the earth are wrought up, how they are prepared for the utility, the convenience, and the pleaſure, of mankind; teach them to know the principal inſtruments and tools employed therein, and duly to prize the perſons that follow them. This will furniſh their underſtanding and their reaſon, as well as their imagination and genius, with great ſtores of uſeful and agreeable reflections.

Conſtantly inure them to attention. Attention is the parent of all ſolid information. Habituate them not to paſs too quickly from one object to another, to conſider every matter on ſeveral ſides, and as far as poſſible on all; to ſee it not only in the whole, but in all its ſeveral parts.

I would not, however, have you to weary their attention in the firſt years of their education, by forcing them to remain too long on one and the ſame particular; but I wiſh you to convince them in a ſenſible manner, and by little and little, of the great utility of a more continued attention. This may be done occaſionally with the moſt trifling concerns. They admire, for inſtance, the beautiful colours or the delightful odour of a flower, and are pleaſed with it. Take occaſion from thence to inform them how many other beauties, how many marks of wiſdom and ſkill, the practiſed eye of the connoiſſeur would find in the ſtructure of this flower, in the formation of its leaves, piſtil, corolla, &c. Shew them therefore often, how much they might have obſerved in this or the other object, if they had conſidered it a little leſs curſorily, if they had dwelt ſomewhat longer upon it. This method of exerciſing and ſtrengthening their attention, will certainly

certainly effect more than the moſt earneſt exhortations to duty, and the ſevereſt puniſhment on the neglect of it.

A third rule to be obſerved in forming the minds of children is this: Beware of giving them falſe or not ſufficiently preciſe ideas of any matter, though of never ſo trifling import. It is far better that they ſhould be utterly ignorant of a hundred things, than have wrong notions of one; far better that you abſolutely refuſe to anſwer certain queſtions at all, than anſwer them in an ambiguous and inadequate manner. In the former caſe, they ſtill know that they are ignorant on this point, and may ſupply the defect of their knowledge in time: whereas in the latter they think themſelves ſufficiently informed of the matter, and ever remain ignorant on that very account. Hence it is, that the firſt ideas we receive of natural or moral ſubjects are, as it were, the ground-plot

of all we afterwards acquire. Are they indeterminate and falſe, then will their baneful influence extend itſelf to all the reſt. Yet how common are the faults that people fall into in this reſpect! It is thought that any anſwer is good enough to the queſtion of a child or a youth. The impoſing a palpable falſehood on them is a matter of no conſideration, provided they are reduced to ſilence by it. It is imagined that in time they will learn to underſtand the matter more truly of themſelves. But this hope is very deceitful. Firſt impreſſions always laſt the longeſt, whether they be in conformity with truth, or miſlead us into error. And even if a man, in riper years, find out his miſtake, yet muſt he be ever on his guard leſt it ſlip into his ideas and judgements, and deceive him again. Give a child, for example, the falſe idea, that thunder and lightning are the effects and tokens of divine diſpleaſure, and that they are ſent to

terrify

terrify and to puniſh the inhabitants of the earth. How deep will this opinion ſtrike into his ſoul! How difficult will it be for him, even in a maturer period of life, to take what he has ſo long conſidered as evident demonſtrations of divine indignation, for the effects of his wiſdom and goodneſs! And even if the youth or the man diſmiſs that error and adopt this truth, yet how often will the impreſſion which ſtill remains, from the firſt mode of repreſentation, lead him againſt his will to falſe concluſions, or overwhelm him with fear and terror! Is not this very fault in education whereof I ſpeak, the cauſe that certain kinds of ſuperſtition are ſo hard to be rooted out, that they purſue and perſecute even perſons who actually perceive the folly of them, during their whole lives?

IV. Another uſeful precept in forming the mind of children, which is cloſely connected with the foregoing, is this: Let

them learn nothing which either on account of their age, or from the want of other kinds of knowledge neceſſary to that purpoſe, they cannot comprehend. Meaſure not their capacities by yours. Attempt not to inſtruct them in matters which you yourſelf can ſcarcely comprehend, or of which you only in later years have been able to acquire any tolerable notions, after particular exertions of your mental powers. In vain, for example, would you labour, by philoſophical argumentation, to certify them of the commencement of the world, of the neceſſity of a Firſt and Eternal Cauſe of it, of the ſpiritual nature of our ſoul, &c. By ſuch endeavours you would only make them diſguſted with your inſtruction, and they would waſte their time and apply their faculties for nothing. Even their memory would not long retain the feeble impreſſion it received from ſuch matters as they could not comprehend. Only that which we learn from conſideration,

tion, and wherein our mind or our heart is thoroughly intereſted, can make an impreſſion on us that is not to be effaced by time. Load not their memory then with ſigns or words, without at the ſame time augmenting their knowledge with real information. On the contrary, allow them in the uſe of no words to which they annex no ſignification, or ſuch as are quite different from what they ought to expreſs. When you hear them make uſe of ſuch words and phraſes the meaning whereof is either obſcure or unknown to them, always aſk them, what they underſtand by ſuch expreſſions; inform yourſelf from them of the ſubject they want to deliver; or, if this is not to be done, then inquire after the properties and effects of it; help them in tracing them out, make as much as poſſible theſe properties, theſe effects, ſenſible to them; or, if the matter be of ſuch a nature that neither by ſigns nor any other means you can adapt it to their com-

prehenſion, then caution them at leaſt againſt the miſapplication of ſuch words, and teach them to reckon it a mere ſound, the meaning of which they muſt take time to learn. Would the gift of ſpeech be ſo much miſuſed by the generality of mankind; ſhould we ſo frequently hear them talk, in ſo confident a tone, and with ſo voluble a tongue, of things which they either do not underſtand at all, or of which they have very confuſed ideas, if they had been accuſtomed in their childhood and youth to think ſomewhat determinately at every word, and not barely to attend to the ſigns, but more to the meaning thoſe ſigns are adopted to imply? But how ſeldom is this rule obſerved! What is more common than to hear children, ſtill in their liſping ſtate, making uſe of words it is impoſſible they ſhould underſtand; to hear them talking, for inſtance, of the atmoſphere, of the ſoul, of exiſtence, of ſpirits, of GOD, of virtue, without

out any one's putting them in mind of their ignorance, or endeavouring to remove it? And what is the conſequence of this? They continue to uſe theſe words, ſometimes in a proper, and ſometimes in an improper manner, as chance or luck directs, believe they underſtand them, and yet even in advanced age have either annexed no meaning at all to them, or one very different from the true. Words are ſigns of the riches of our mind; but theſe riches are imaginary, and theſe ſigns are like counterfeit coin, when we are not acquainted with their meaning.

V. To theſe precepts, the obſervance of which will greatly contribute to forming the mind of children, another muſt be added, by no means of leſs importance. It is this: endeavour not only to increaſe and extend their knowledge, but likewiſe to render it ſolid and certain. It is far better for them to know a few things thoroughly,

thoroughly, than to have only a ſuperficial acquaintance with many. Beware of the ordinary vanity of parents and tutors on this head. They often think more of gratifying this, than of promoting the real advantage of their children and pupils. If they can ſpeak of many and various matters with a certain flippancy and confidence, it fills the ignorant hearer with aſtoniſhment; if they are employed in the ſtudy of ſeveral arts and ſciences at once; if they already, while children or while youths, can anſwer queſtions which men both in underſtanding and years will not venture to ſolve; then they rejoice at the great ſucceſs of their endeavours. And yet it is impoſſible that the underſtanding which takes in ſo much at once, and muſt direct its attention to ſuch a diverſity of matters, ſhould make proper diſtinctions among them, and acquire a ſolid knowledge of all. It will rather get the habit of conſidering every thing with a tranſient regard,

gard, and of inveſtigating nothing. Avoid this miſtake, you who have the forming and the inſtructing of others, committed to your charge. Teach them to think with ſolidity. Teach them, not only that a matter is ſo, and that it has theſe or the other properties and effects; but teach them likewiſe, as far as their capacity will allow them to apprehend, why the matter is ſo and no otherwiſe, and why it has theſe properties and effects. Never require them, either from indolence or ſelf-conceit, to believe every thing you ſay on your bare word, or to hold your aſſertions for infallible oracles. Accuſtom them much rather to aſk you the reaſon for what you ſay, and to receive your inſtruction as truth, not ſo much out of reſpect for you, as on account of your reaſons. Unleſs you do this, they will become in time either doubters or ſervile followers of other men's opinions. They will, properly ſpeaking, know nothing; but will only be able to repeat

repeat what others have thought and ſaid before them.

VI. The greateſt pains, however, you can take, to form the mind of your child or your ſcholar, will be of but little real ſervice to him, if you barely conduct him to knowledge, and not at the ſame time to wiſdom, which conſiſts in the right application of it. This gives you occaſion for other rules of proceeding, which are theſe: Shew them, in all they learn, the uſe they may and muſt make of it for themſelves and others. Teach them to conſider every thing on its practical ſide, and actually to bring it into uſe on all proper occaſions. Make it your principal and conſtant aim to teach them to judge rightly of the value of things. This is true wiſdom, which is of far greater value than all other ſciences put together, and which can never be obtained too ſoon, as it muſt be the ſole conductreſs of life. Teach therefore your children

children to obſerve the great difference there is between outward, tranſient, periſhable goods and advantages, and ſuch as are properly our own, and which we continually preſerve. Teach them to prize health and ſtrength of body more than riches or a beautiful perſon; the approbation of conſcience more than the eſteem and the applauſe of men; and virtue and integrity higher than wealth, honour, health, and life. Theſe are doctrines, which are ſo incontrovertible, and which may be rendered ſo comprehenſible even to children, that it is almoſt always the fault of their parents or their tutors, when they learn to think otherwiſe. Does your child, for example, admire the ſplendor, the richneſs, the coſtlineſs of ſome perſon's dreſs; then aſk him on the firſt occaſion afterwards, whether a bad man who ſhould wear ſuch cloaths would be the better for them; whether they could give a ſick man health, an infirm one ſtrength, or communicate

municate to an ignorant man underſtanding and prudence; whether it would not be much nobler to relieve a number of poor, and to go leſs ſplendidly cloathed, than to be unmerciful, to leave a brother in the depths of miſery, and to be ſwoln with pride in things that are not our own. Does he make too great account of a beautiful figure; then ſhew him other children, or other grown perſons, who, with a much leſs handſome form, are more reſpected and beloved, as they are more humble, more gentle, more beneficent, and better than they; or tell them of certain perſons who by various accidents have loſt their beautiful face or appearance, or who, with all their beauty, have been hated and deſpiſed, as they had not a beautiful ſoul, as they had no real merit. Is he too much captivated with the praiſes that are beſtowed upon him; then, take occaſion to ſhew him, how prodigal and inconſiderate moſt men are in the diſtribution of their

praiſes; how often they praiſe a thing which they do not underſtand, do not eſteem, do not love; how ſelfiſh, and how fickle, they are in their judgements, &c. But would you have your children or your pupils learn to judge rightly of theſe things, O you whom GOD has appointed to be parents and teachers; then muſt they never hear any other but right judgements paſſed upon them by you. If you allow yourſelves to be dazzled by the luſtre of rich apparel, a beautiful figure, and other ſuch outward diſtinctions, if you yourſelves ſet great ſtore by theſe objects, and attribute to them a great importance by the zeal and ſerioufneſs with which you treat them, if you yourſelves ſhew to perſons decorated by ſuch diſtinctions a particular reverence on their account; then will the very beſt leſſons you can give your children on this article, in the hours of inſtruction, be of no effect. But treat theſe things yourſelf with a certain generous indif-

indifference; eſteem and honour yourſelf true merit alone, under whatever form, in whatever dreſs and ſtation it appears, and your doctrine, ſupported on your example, will infallibly produce the faireſt fruits.

Another rule, ariſing from the foregoing, is: Preſerve them from being haſty in forming concluſions, and avail yourſelf of all opportunites for leading them, by obſervations, to circumſpection and preciſion in their concluſions and judgements. How many miſtakes, for example, may a man commit, who too ſuddenly takes two matters, that immediately follow or accompany each other, for effect and cauſe! How many kinds of ſuperſtition, how many errors in natural philoſophy as well as immorality, owe their origin and their ſubſiſtence merely to this haſtineſs! For example, would the good man, who meets with ſevere misfortunes and afflictions, be ſo frequently declared a hypocrite, and the impious, who

who ſucceeds in his undertakings, be pronounced the favorite of heaven, if human events had not too raſhly been taken for neceſſary conſequences of their good or bad conduct, for infallible evidences of divine complacency or indignation? Would any one attribute the loſſes, the hardſhips, the affliction, which the virtuous eventually undergo, and which they muſt endure, to the account of virtue herſelf, and repreſent her under the moſt diſagreeable images, if he had not accuſtomed himſelf to conſider all things that happen together, or that follow on each other, as things that neceſſarily belong to one another? This, however, takes its firſt riſe in early education. At leaſt it may be very much guarded againſt therein.

But the time will not allow me to purſue theſe obſervations farther. By way of concluſion, let us briefly draw ſome reſults

from hence, which may induce us to put in practice the foregoing precepts.

What a difficult taſk the forming of the mind of children is! This is a reſult which doubtleſs every attentive hearer of my preſent diſcourſe has already drawn for himſelf. And in truth, what attention, what application, what unwearied patience, what condeſcenſion, is neceſſary for teaching a child or a youth to feel juſtly, to think juſtly, and to judge juſtly! What diverſity in the manner of applying theſe endeavours is requiſite to the diverſity of human capacities and diſpoſitions! How often does a man find himſelf obliged to labour an unfruitful ſoil; and how eaſily may tares and weeds get the aſcendancy even in a good one!

But the more difficult the taſk, the more is he bound to exert his faculties to the utmoſt, who has it to perform, if he would do

do it with ſucceſs. This is another reſult from what has been ſaid, which probably many from ſlothfulneſs have forgot to draw. The greateſt difficulties will be at length overcome, if we contend with them as often as they return, and neglect no advantage that may facilitate the conqueſt. This is the caſe with education in general, and with the forming of the minds of children in particular. If you confine this buſineſs to certain hours or ſeaſons, and then loſe it entirely out of ſight; then, if you do not entirely fail in your deſign, you will certainly accompliſh it but very imperfectly. The mind of the child, or the youth, is always employed; and is conſtantly therefore in need of an inſpector or guide. If you continually accompany him, as much as poſſible; if you regard and employ, not only the hours devoted properly to ſtudy, but alſo his pleaſures and ſports, as means and opportunities for labouring at the formation of his mind; if you turn every ac-

cidental circumſtance to account for effecting this deſign, then certainly your endeavours will not be in vain; the fruit of them will frequently ſurpaſs your expectations.

Difficult, however, as this buſineſs is, and how much diligence ſoever it demands, it is no leſs noble and delightful. This is a third reſult we may make from our foregoing conſiderations. What can be more becoming a reaſonable being, and what ſhould be more pleaſant to him, than to facilitate to another being of his own ſpecies, with whom he ſtands in the cloſeſt connection, the acquiſition of that perfection whereof he is capable, to obſerve the firſt rays of his dawning reaſon, and the various effects of the ſtronger or weaker effulgence of it, to aſſiſt the feeble efforts of his ſtill tottering reaſon, to communicate or remove whatever may promote or retard his progreſs, to give his own expe-

rience to one ſtill quite unexperienced, and his force to one quite impotent, to put aſide the impediments he meets with in his way, to warn him of the miſtakes he himſelf has committed, and to render him an intelligent reverer of truth, a man of juſt diſcernment and ſolid judgment, a truly wiſe man? How much muſt ſuch an one acquire himſelf, who does this with earneſtneſs and application; and how much may he contribute thereby, not only to the benefit of particular perſons, but frequently to the advantage of the whole community!

But, laſtly, judge, from the whole, whether it is an indifferent matter, whether it is not rather extremely dangerous to leave children long and frequently to the care and in the company of perſons totally uncultivated, and with minds full of prejudices and errors! What will, indeed what can ſuch perſons contribute to the forming of their minds? Are they in a

condition, even with the beſt intentions, to obſerve the rules of circumſpection we have delivered above? Can one blind perſon ſafely lead another? Will not your children, by frequenting them, get the habit of uſing words they do not underſtand, of forming opinions on matters they are unacquainted with, of connecting truth with falſhood, of preferring the marvellous to the natural, the myſterious to the intelligible, of determining from ſelfiſhneſs and without reaſon, of maintaining their opinion with obſtinacy, and of allowing themſelves to be dazzled by every outſide ſhew? And, on the other ſide, how many opportunities do you thus loſe of inſtructing them, of reminding them, of leading them right, of encouraging or reſtraining them, and of turning to advantage the happy moments wherein you may advance them ſeveral ſteps, when you may free them from ſome error, or lead them to the knowledge of truth? O be jealous of this happineſs;

pineſs; and be perſuaded, that parents and tutors, are never more great and reſpectable, than when they ſtand beſide their children or their pupils, and teach them wiſdom by their leſſons and their conduct. This is ſuitable to your vocation; this is well-pleaſing to the God of order, who has placed you in this ſtation; and by ſuch behaviour alone may you promiſe yourſelves his bleſſing in this, and his reward in the future world.

OF FORMING THE HEARTS OF CHILDREN.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Prov. xxii. 6.

OF FORMING THE HEARTS OF CHILDREN.

EVERY prerogative of mind a man acquires by reflection and practice, all the ſagacity and knowledge he may obtain by its means, are only ſo far eſtimable as he is enabled thereby to promote his own real happineſs and that of other men. This however he can no otherwiſe do than by willingly and faithfully following the light of his underſtanding; by not

not only thinking and judging agreeably to truth, but likewiſe by acting in conformity with it; by not only nicely diſtinguiſhing good and ill from each other, but likewiſe by loving and ſeeking the good alone, and by deteſting and avoiding the ill. His underſtanding and his will, his ſentiments and his behaviour, muſt therefore be in perfect uniſon. The knowledge of truth muſt lead him to the love and the practice of virtue. And this muſt alſo be the aim of a rational and chriſtian education. Which conſiſts, as I lately had occaſion to mention, not barely in forming the mind, but likewiſe in forming the heart of children, and in training them to religion and to chriſtianity. Of the former, of forming their minds, we have already diſcourſed. The ſecond, or the forming of their hearts, ſhall employ us to-day, and, if it pleaſe God, on Sunday next; and the third, namely, their manuduction to religion and to chriſtianity, we purpoſe

to

to undertake the firſt convenient occaſion afterwards.

To form the hearts of children, implies the direction of their propenſities and deſires to the worthieſt objects, to inſpire them with a predominant love towards all that is true, and right, and good, and thereby to render the performance of their duty eaſy and pleaſant to them.

The forming of the heart preſuppoſes, as every one readily perceives, the forming of the mind; and though the latter be in ſome meaſure diſtinct from the former, and may ſubſiſt alone, yet the former can by no means ſubſiſt independently on the latter. It is inherent in our nature, that our will, on moſt occaſions, ſhould follow the perceptions and precepts of our underſtanding. We will only that which we figure to ourſelves as good; and we abhor only that which we hold to be bad; and if at times we are indifferent or averſe towards the good and

covet

covet and ſeek the bad, it is that we then conſider the good as bad, and the bad as good. The more juſtly, therefore, we think and judge, and the more eaſy and natural this way of thinking and judging is become, ſo much the juſter likewiſe will be the determinations of our will and the deſires and averſions ariſing from them. Conſequently, the more carefully the underſtanding of a child or a youth is cultivated and formed, ſo much the greater ſucceſs may we promiſe ourſelves in regard to the forming of his heart. Which, in fact, for the moſt part conſiſts only in teaching him to apply the juſt ideas and judgments that have been communicated to him, or that we have helped him to acquire, to whatever has any concern with his moral conduct and the happineſs of himſelf and other men; in endeavouring to facilitate to him this application by a wiſe uſe of every favourable circumſtance, and by removing or diminiſhing the inward

or outward impediments which ſtand in his way, or which may make it very difficult for him to follow the lights of his underſtanding. In this view many practices may and ſhould be adopted, and if I may venture to ſay ſo, many artifices uſed, which are very various, according to the diverſity of perſons we have to do with, and the opportunities that offer. Hence then it is not poſſible, in a diſcourſe that is devoted to the inſtruction of numbers, to ſay all that is neceſſary for every one in particular to know and to obſerve. We muſt content ourſelves with ſome general rules of prudent conduct in forming the heart or the moral character of children, and leave the cloſer appropriation of theſe rules to ſuch individuals as are actually employed in the application of them.

I. The firſt rule is this: Study to find out their temperament, and conduct yourſelf according to it. The temperament is, as

as it were, the ſoil that is to be cultivated; and the diverſity of this ſoil is not ſo great but it may ſoon be diſcovered. More or leſs vivacity and quickneſs in ideas, more or leſs ſenſibility towards good and evil, towards pleaſure and pain, more or leſs vehemence in the deſires, more or leſs diſpoſition to reſt or to activity, in theſe conſiſts the principal diverſity in what may be called the temperament of children. All theſe various temperaments may lead as well to the virtues as to the vices. To promote the former and to prevent the latter, is the principal buſineſs of worthy parents and honeſt tutors. Great vivacity, ſenſibility, activity, are excellent qualities, when they are directed purely to good and proper objects, and have reaſon for their guide. You need not therefore ſtifle or ſuppreſs them, but you muſt ſpare no pains to give them the beſt direction, and to keep them within the bounds of moderation. The vivacity of intellect muſt be

inured

inured to important and uſeful ſciences and knowledge; ſenſibility of heart, exhibited in a tender and delicate feeling for all that is really beautiful, noble, and great; and the activity muſt be ſo conducted as to become an officious zeal for being truly ſerviceable and generally uſeful. Children, and young people who have theſe qualities, muſt be frequently and expreſsly cautioned againſt the miſuſe of them, and ſhewn the evil to themſelves and to others that will ariſe from this miſuſe. They, again, who are more tardy in their ideas and actions, who are more diſpoſed to inaction and ſloth, and are more difficult to be ſet in motion, muſt not be diſpirited and ſtupified by bitter reproaches or cruel treatment. They are naturally timid, and have but little confidence in themſelves. They require therefore to be handled with greater gentleneſs and patience; they muſt be encouraged to abandon the obſcurity they ſeek, and be placed frequently in

ſuch circumſtances as are adapted to make ſtronger impreſſions upon them, and to give, as it were, a new impetus to their ſoul. Every temper, as I have already obſerved, may conduce to errors. Every appetite may degenerate into inordinate paſſion. Watch but carefully over your children, you who have the forming of their hearts, and intend to lead them to virtue. Connive at no fault, and labour at its amendment as ſoon as it is committed. Strive particularly to repreſs the firſt evil emotions and deſires that ſpring from their temperament; and let not the faulty or the bad, to which they have the ſtrongeſt propenſity by means of their temperament, ever grow into a habit; and if unhappily this be already the caſe, then let your conſtant and utmoſt endeavour be exerted to conquer it, by repreſenting to them, in the livelieſt manner, the impropriety and the harmfulneſs of it, by depriving them of all opportunities that may

ſtrengthen

ſtrengthen them in it, and by inducing them to the frequent repetition of thoſe actions which are in direct oppoſition to it.

II. Accuſtom them to act from principle and purpoſe, and not by blind impulſe or mere ſelf-will. Make it comprehenſible to them, that it is a great pre-eminence which man has over the irrational animals; and that the man who does not make uſe of this prerogative debaſes himſelf, and falls into an inferior claſs of creatures. Often aſk them, not in an authoritative, but in a familiar and friendly way, why they do this, and neglect the other? why they eminently eſteem and value certain perſons or things, and deſpiſe and avoid others? why, among various advantages and pleaſures that they may have, they chuſe exactly ſuch and no other? what views they have in this or that buſineſs, in theſe or thoſe attempts, &c.? Endeavour thus to gain their confidence,

that they may diſcover to you the thoughts of their heart without reſerve; and if, at times, they anſwer your queſtions merely by ſaying, "I do not know," or, "I cannot tell why myſelf," yet let not this incite you to diſpleaſure; but help them to find out the reaſon of their behaviour, of which they themſelves are frequently not clearly conſcious; converſe freely with them upon the matter in hand, and on the views a man may propoſe to himſelf therein; conſult in a friendly manner with them, what were the beſt to be done in ſuch or ſuch events; how a man may moſt eaſily and moſt ſafely attain to certain ends; and when it does not relate to too important matters, then let them chuſe themſelves, and let them follow their choice without your interference; but remind them afterwards of the faults they have committed, and of the evil conſequences that have ariſen from them. If, farther, you enjoin them certain orders

which

which you will have obeyed; then at the ſame time tell them, if not in all caſes, yet you may in moſt, the true deſigns and views you have in iſſuing ſuch orders. Tell them, why you command this, and forbid the other; and endeavour to make them comprehend that your reaſons and deſigns are right and good.—Do they, in return, require of you an account of your own behaviour? do they aſk you, why on ſuch occaſions you proceed in ſuch a manner? why you ſometimes do that very action, and at others neglect it? Do not always reject theſe queſtions, as the effect of a blameable curioſity; and think not that by anſwering them you give up any thing of the reſpect that is due to you; rather ſhew them, that you conſtantly endeavour to follow the rules of truth and order, of moderation and juſtice; and if you would have them to act from ſagacity and reaſon, then take great care that they have no cauſe to ſuſpect that you yourſelf

act without reaſon, and are merely ſwayed by the dictates of ſelf-intereſt.

III. But, thirdly, do not content yourſelf with teaching them to act from reaſon, as rational creatures; but teach them to act upon the beſt and nobleſt principles, and in pure and beneficent views. Beware of ſetting their ambition in motion alone, and of inciting them to application and duty from no motive but the idea of the judgement that others paſs on them, and the good or bad opinion of them they ſhall cauſe them to entertain. If once you allow this appetite to become the predominant paſſion, then are they loſt to real virtue—loſt to real happineſs. For the greateſt part, the moſt exalted of the virtues muſt be practiſed in ſecret and without any witneſs; and he that is only happy in the favourable judgement of mankind, can promiſe himſelf but few days perfectly chearful and pleaſant. No; he alone is vir-

virtuous, who, independent on the judgement and opinion of mankind, is actuated by an ever-efficient diſpoſition to whatever is right and good; and he alone can be happy, who can pleaſe himſelf with the innocency of his heart, and the approbation of his conſcience. To this virtue, and to this happineſs, ſtrive to conduct your children or your ſcholars, you who are employed in the forming of their hearts. Let them at times deliberate with you, whether juſt, equitable, beneficent, magnanimous actions only become, by the judgement the ſpectators paſs on them, juſt, equitable, beneficent, and magnanimous actions; whether they are not ſo in all times and in all places; whether they are not ſo even when no one is by to judge and approve them; whether they themſelves have ever lamented the having done ſome good action in ſecret, whether they have not even then felt a certain pleaſure from it; whether there be not a great and

unalterable difference between truth and lies, between order and diſorder; whether virtue be not productive of order and tranquillity as well in the hearts of men as in ſocial life; and whether vice, on the contrary, do not cauſe confuſion and diſſonance in both. Aſk them, whether they enjoy the ſame agreeable ſenſations, the ſame ſatiſfaction, when men praiſe them on account of thoſe qualities and actions which their own conſcience diſclaims, as when they are commended and applauded for the good they have actually done; and teach them from hence to draw this concluſion, that our ſentiments and actions muſt, in and of themſelves, be either good or bad, proper or improper, let them be judged of as they may by the reſt of mankind.

IV. Teach them farther, for rendering this ſtill more comprehenſible to them, to attend to the conſequences of their actions or of their behaviour. Teach them duly

to

to prize the peace of mind, the ſatisfaction, the chearfulneſs of ſpirit, the health and ſtrength of body, their improvement in knowledge or ſkill, the eſteem and honour, and the other advantages they have reaped from their honeſt and good behaviour. Congratulate them on theſe advantages, and rejoice with them thereon. Lament with them, on the other hand, if they are likely to be deprived of theſe precious goods by their own fault, and are only therefore unhappy becauſe they have neglected their duty or acted contrary to it. Let them, however, likewiſe feel the bad and pernicious effects of their improper behaviour, as far as is needful for their warning and amendment; and take no pains to free them from ſuch feelings till they have confeſſed and bewailed their raſhneſs and folly. Shew them, one while by their own and at another by foreign example, what diſorder, what pains and ſickneſſes, what dreadful calamities, intemperance in ſenſual plea-

ſure, the violence of anger and other paſſions, the want of diligence and induſtry, prodigality and avarice, and all ſins and vices in general, infallibly draw after them; how by little and little they degrade and enfeeble the ſpirit of man, abate his courage, deſtroy his health, ſhorten his life, undermine his outward welfare, reduce him to an unprofitable, contemptible, noxious member of human ſociety, torment his conſcience, and bring on him a thouſand various kinds of trouble, wretchedneſs, and woe. But ſhew them likewiſe, on the other hand, what ample rewards the upright and virtuous man finds, in the approbation of his conſcience, in the repoſe of his heart, in the idea of the utility and the pleaſure he procures to his brethren, in the eſteem and love he has a right to expect from them, and in the aſſurance of the divine complacency and favour; how happy he is in acting upon firm and honeſt principles; how happy that he has

learnt to govern himſelf and to limit his deſires; that he can uſe the faculties both of his mind and body freely and with chearfulneſs to the ends for which God has given them to him; that he has no man to avoid, and no man to fear, becauſe he avoids evil and fears God; that he is never diſmayed or dejected at any untoward event; that he knows how to maintain his real freedom, and is neither the ſlave of cuſtom, of vanity, or his own cupidity. Admire this happineſs of the virtuous on all occaſions and in all its circumſtances before your children, your ſcholars; but do it with a bright and lively countenance, with a ſentimental heart; and let them ſee how much you yourſelf are penetrated with the value of it, how far you prefer it beyond all riches, all power, all the voluptuouſneſs of the vicious and the vain.

V. To this rule another is cloſely united, which is this: Strive to make their duty a pleaſure

pleaſure to them. Habituate them to connect duty and pleaſure as intimately together in their ideas as they actually are in nature. Shew them, as much by your example as your precepts, that every duty which a man heartily and chearfully fulfils is repaid by ſatisfaction and pleaſure. By your example, in giving yourſelf up to the emotions of pure delight in their preſence on having faithfully completed ſome duty. Have you, for example, as a truſtee or a friend, reduced the affairs of a widow, of an orphan, of a diſtreſſed friend, into order; have you had an opportunity to reclaim one of your acquaintanee from the way of folly and vice, or occaſioned him to do a good act; have you been ſo happy as to chear and reſtore ſome wretch, or to afford ſome effectual relief to a poor and ſick perſon; have you diſcharged the duties of your office and calling with remarkably good ſucceſs, or do you perceive it manifeſtly attended by a bleſſing, and you immediately

mediately return from theſe noble and delightful occupations, to your children or your ſcholars; then let them participate in your ſatisfaction and joy, make them acquainted with the reaſon of it, as far as you can without injury to modeſty; and thus ſhew them how amply a man is rewarded by the conſciouſneſs of having acted honeſtly and well. Shew them likewiſe, by your inſtructions, while you teach them to remark and to diſtinguiſh the agreeable, the joyful ſenſations which they themſelves experience on the like occaſions; and at the ſame time compare them with the diſſatisfaction, the perturbation, the diſmay, which glide into our hearts againſt our will, when we have not done what we ſhould have done, or have not done it as we ought. Do you exhort them to duty; then convince them by your manner, that your aim is not to diſplay your power and authority over them, or to cauſe them unneceſſary pains and toil, but merely to promote their perfection and

their

their welfare. Acquaint them with virtue, not as an auſtere ſovereign, as the enemy of pleaſure and joy, but as the beſt, as the only ſure means to true felicity. Never ſay to them, that indeed the vicious man is commonly happier in the world than the virtuous; but notwithſtanding this, that a man *muſt* be virtuous, becauſe GOD has commanded it. No; this ſtatement is falſe, and can only make pernicious impreſſions on minds which are yet not fully capable of diſtinguiſhing the ſemblance of happineſs from happineſs itſelf. Much rather teach them, that virtue alone makes happy, and that vice alone makes wretched; that GOD forbids us nothing but what is bad and noxious, and that he requires nothing of us but what is even in this world actually profitable and good; that piety and innocent joy are not at variance, but cheriſh and promote each other; and that the events wherein the upright and the pious have particularly much to ſuffer do not appear to be many.

VI.

VI. For facilitating all this to them, for teaching them to act from motives, to act from the beſt motives, and to be attentive to the conſequences of their actions, and for rendering their duty a pleaſure to them, you muſt accuſtom them betimes to ſelf-examination, which is the moſt excellent means for conſtantly becoming more wiſe and virtuous. Not that you are to impoſe ſelf-examination on them as a matter of buſineſs, that *muſt* daily be gone through; ſuch conſtraint would ſoon make it hateful and totally uſeleſs to them. Here you will not aſſume ſo much the ſtyle of a ſevere inquiſitor as that of a friend, who takes an intereſt in all that befalls his friend, who rejoices with him on account of all the good he has done, and manifeſts a hearty ſorrow when he has been ſo unhappy as to do amiſs. And how many opportunities for doing this muſt needs preſent themſelves to attentive parents and preceptors! For example, when furrounded by your children,

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at the close of the day or of the week, when they are delighted and happy in your company, when you evince to them your tender concern and love, and thence excite emotions in them of gratitude and reciprocal fondness, and have gained their confidence; how easy is it then to call their attention to lately passed transactions and events, and to prompt this investigation by some such questions as these! "How have I passed this day, or this week? Have I done any thing this day, this week? learnt any thing, or exercised myself in any thing which gives me real cause of satisfaction and joy, and which may likewise in future be of use to myself or others? Have I, during this time, so far advanced myself in any art, science, or aptitude, as I might have done? or have I done and spoken any thing of which I should now be ashamed, which probably I may long lament, the hurtful consequences of which I may for a long while feel? Can there be any one

who

who is now ſighing on my account, becauſe I have injured him, or given him an affront? Is there any one now ſuffering pain or hardſhips becauſe I have denied him the relief and aſſiſtance which he implored of me, and which I had it in my power to beſtow? Have I ſaid or done any thing that may have cauſed uneaſineſs, diſſatisfaction, and vexation, to my parents, my teachers, or even to the domeſticks that attend me?" Happy both you and your children, if you thus accuſtom them by little and little to ſelf-examination, if at times you animate them therein by your own example, if you are not aſhamed to confeſs and to deplore your faults in their preſence, at leaſt ſuch as you have committed before them, to lament the neglect of the good act you might have done, to rejoice with them in the thoughts on what you actually performed; and in this manner to teach them wiſdom and virtue by the contemplation of their behaviour and your own!

VII. Teach them, in like manner, to reap benefit from the conduct of other men. Are you with them in company (and it were to be wiſhed that you were ſeldom in company without them), then notice what is ſaid and done in their preſence, and afterwards enter into a friendly converſation with them upon it. Do this likewiſe as often as they return home from company in which you could not attend them. They themſelves will furniſh you with matter enough for ſuch converſations. Children and young people are commonly more attentive obſervers of what paſſes in their preſence than perſons of riper years. The generality of things have ſtill the charm of novelty for them; and their attention is leſs interrupted than with us, who often come into company poſſeſſed by various cares and intricate concerns. Therefore let your children or your pupils communicate to you the obſervations they have made on ſuch occaſions; and do not pre-

vent them in their judgements by preſſing them too eagerly with your own. Search after the good or bad impreſſions the diſcourſe they have heard or the behaviour they have been witneſs to has left upon them. Endeavour by reaſon and argument to ſtrengthen the good impreſſions they have received, and to weaken or efface the bad. Caution them againſt the faults and inadvertencies they have remarked in others. Shew them how much harm theſe perſons do themſelves thereby, and how much the pleaſure of ſocial life is thus diminiſhed. Hold up to them ſuch as have diſtinguiſhed themſelves for their integrity, diſcretion, humility, prudence, and philanthropy, as patterns for their imitation; and teach them how reſpectable and amiable they will thus render themſelves to all men. But never allow them to judge their neighbour with ill-natured ſeverity. Accuſtom them much rather to excuſe whatever is excuſable, and to conſider ſuch actions and

ſpeeches as are capable of various interpretations always on the favourable ſide. Impoſe it upon them as a duty, never to ſpread any farther what they have ſeen faulty or blameable in another, or to laugh and make merry over it; but merely to apply it to their own warning and improvement. By theſe means you will render their intercourſe with others not only harmleſs to them, but you will make it a uſeful ſchool of wiſdom and virtue.

VIII. Finally, to this end call hiſtory likewiſe to your aſſiſtance. Think not that your children or your ſcholars are ſufficiently ſtudying hiſtory, when they are merely imprinting on their memory a multitude of tranſactions and events of various degrees of importance, with all their circumſtances and effects, and to repeat them again. Hiſtory is calculated to make us wiſer and better; it is there we are to ſtudy ourſelves and mankind, if we would have

it

it of real benefit. To this purpoſe, however, children and young perſons muſt have a guide, as they are not yet exerciſed enough in reflection for ſeeking and finding this utility without the help of others. But by means of this guidance, hiſtory may afford them the ſame advantage they procure from their own experience; and this benefit they will in fact reap from it in a much eaſier and leſs hazardous manner. Aſk them therefore frequently, while buſied in this ſtudy, what they think of this or that diſpoſition, theſe or thoſe ſentiments and actions of men? why they pronounce one to be juſt, reaſonable, generous, beneficent; and thoſe on the contrary, unjuſt, low, cruel, or inhuman? why they contemplate one with pleaſure and joy, but the other with abhorrence and affright? why they take more intereſt in the fortunes of one perſon than in the fortunes of another? Aſk them what they themſelves would have done in ſuch or

ſuch circumſtance? how they would have determined? which party they would have ſided with? whether they would have neglected that opportunity of doing right, and whether they could have reſiſted that inducement to do wrong? Apply all that they read and hear to themſelves, and to the particular circumſtances in which they are at preſent, or are likely to be placed hereafter. Teach them conſtantly to obſerve their own hearts, to trace out its latent diſpoſitions; and if theſe diſpoſitions are diſorderly and bad, ſo much the earlier and more valiantly to combat them, that they may the plainer perceive from what happens to others, to what exceſſes and enormities theſe appetites may impel the man who fondly ſubmits to their ſway. In this manner will hiſtory at once amuſe, inſtruct, and improve them; it will be an excellent means of forming their heart, and of making them morally good.

We ſhould now proceed to the particular virtues to which children and young people

people are principally to be led, and in which they are conſtantly to be exerciſed. But the time already elapſed, and the abundance of the matter, allow me not at preſent to enter upon that important part of education. This, by the favour of GOD, is what I deſign for the ſubject of my next Sunday's diſcourſe.

I ſhall therefore ſhut up the preſent with an obſervation, the juſtneſs whereof no attentive hearer of what I have already advanced on this ſubject will call into doubt. It is this: If, as we ſaw in our former diſcourſe, the forming of the minds of children be a tremendous undertaking, the forming of their hearts is a no leſs ſerious and arduous employ. It demands great attention, unremitted induſtry, and unwearied patience; it demands much circumſpection and prudence. Parents and preceptors muſt keep a conſtant guard over themſelves no leſs than their children; ob-

ſerve every good or bad diſpoſition as it diſcloſes itſelf to view; uſe every opportunity for ſtrengthening the one, and weakening the other; eſteem nothing as trifling that may have an influence on their moral character; connect inſtruction and practice conſtantly together, and give force and energy to both by your own example; always act upon the ſame principles, and immoveably proſecute the ſame deſign, though you ſhould every day meet with new obſtructions on the way that conducts you to it. He that purſues this buſineſs as if it were a kind of by-employment; he who thinks to accompliſh every thing by precept and command; he who treats his children or his ſcholars, not as rational creatures, which are enlightened and moved by ideas to goodneſs, but as machines which muſt be jogged and puſhed forward; he who does not readily let himſelf down to their weakneſs, and often mentally put himſelf in their place, for better adapting

his inſtruction and his diſcipline to their comprehenſion and wants; he who proceeds one way to-day, and to-morrow another—to-day with an exceſſive indulgence, and with as exceſſive a ſeverity to-morrow; he who allows himſelf to be deterred by the firſt difficulties he encounters, by the firſt unſucceſsful attempt, from proceeding with diligence, and has not fortitude enough to work whole years with the ſame aſſiduity, though as yet he ſees no particular fruit of his labours; he will not indeed advance far in this important and toilſome buſineſs: but he has no one to blame but himſelf, if his too much interrupted, erroneous, and ſelf-deſtroying labours are almoſt all in vain. Let me addreſs a word or two to you in particular who have the happineſs to be mothers. You may—you ſhould contribute moſt to the forming of the hearts of your children. You may—you ſhould labour at it daily and hourly, and your tender love alone can over-

overcome the difficulties attendant on it. But if you diſcharge your duty in this particular in its whole extent, you render yourſelves far more uſeful than our ſex, and contribute far more to the happineſs of it than all of us can do, whatever office we may fill, in whatever ſtation we may be placed.

OF

OF TRAINING UP CHILDREN TO THE PRIMARY VIRTUES IN PARTICULAR.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

PROV. xxii. 6.

OF TRAINING UP CHILDREN TO THE PRIMARY VIRTUES IN PARTICULAR.

IN regard to aptitude and ſkill it is the ſame with virtue as with mechanical or other arts. Would we acquire this aptitude, we muſt exerciſe ourſelves early and conſtantly in the virtues or the arts; a man muſt learn to eſteem and love them in his earlieſt youth, and thence they gradually become ſo eaſy and ſo natural, that at length he will find it difficult to do any thing contrary to the rules of art, or the precepts

precepts of virtue. As little as that man merits the appellation of a good artiſt, who only now and then produces a good piece; ſo little does he deſerve the name of a virtuous man, who only thinks and acts at times virtuouſly, as it were by chance, and at the expence of great pains. Hence you may conclude, how neceſſary it is for us to bring up children to virtue with all poſſible care from their earlieſt infancy, and continually to exerciſe them in it, if we would have them truly virtuous men. And this in fact is one of the moſt important articles in rational and Chriſtian education, and herein the forming of their hearts or their moral character principally conſiſts.

In our laſt diſcourſe we ſaw what was in general requiſite thereto, and how we are to ſet about this forming of the hearts of children. Namely, we muſt find out their temperament, and conduct ourſelves accord-

accordingly; we muſt habituate them to act from principle and purpoſe, and not from blind impulſe, or mere ſelf-will; we muſt teach them to act upon good, upon the beſt principles, and to be attentive to the conſequences of their actions; we muſt ſtrive to make their duty their pleaſure. For the promoting of theſe views, we muſt initiate them in ſelf examination, and do our utmoſt to make their intercourſe with others, and their ſtudy of hiſtory, tend to their improvement.

To theſe general rules, let us to-day ſubjoin a few that ſhall be more particularly relative to the chief ſingle virtues to which children and young perſons ſhould be trained up by thoſe who have their hearts or their moral characters to form.

I. The firſt of theſe rules is this: Inure them from their earlieſt infancy to obedience and ſubmiſſion. He that has not learnt

learnt this in his childhood and youth is unhappy for the reſt of his life. We all meet with a thouſand occurrences where we muſt ſubmit, where we muſt yield obedience, if we would not act counter to our duties, or bring harm upon ourſelves and others. Either we muſt avoid human ſociety altogether, renounce all its advantages and pleaſures, and take up our abode in the caves of the rock, or the dens of the foreſt; or we muſt ſacrifice a part of our natural liberty to the ſecurity and quiet uſe of the reſt, allow ourſelves to undergo certain reſtraints, and alternately yield to each other. But how unfit muſt he be for this, who has, for ten, fifteen, or a greater number of years, unmoleſtedly followed his own inclinations! who has ſuffered no oppoſition, whoſe wiſhes for every thing he ſaw were ſo many commands with which the blind love of his parents and tutors was for ever complying! and who now all at once muſt think and act in a quite

a quite different manner! The time is arrived when he muſt enter on the world. At every ſtep he meets with obſtructions. His wiſhes are ſcarcely noticed, while he expects to ſee all men running to fulfill them. They much rather openly oppoſe his deſires and aims. His arrogance will be offended one while in this manner, and then in another; but nothing will cure him of it, as it has taken too faſt a hold. Unfortunate man! deplorable victim of exceſſive indulgence! how often, when once thou comeſt to reflection, how often wilt thou lament this cruel indulgence! How often wilt thou wiſh that thy parents, thy preceptors, had exerted their proper authority over thee, and taught thee obedience! O ye parents, would you ſpare your children theſe ſighs, theſe complaints, and the evils that force them from them; then exerciſe them, I ſay, exerciſe them, for by precept and exhortation alone you will never ſucceed; exerciſe them in obe-

dience and ſubmiſſion. Allow yourſelves to be eaſily prevailed on; frequently go before their requeſts, when they aſk for things innocent and good; and ſhew them by facts how much you have their real pleaſure, and their real happineſs, at heart; but never let them force any thing from you; never yield to their impetuoſity or clamour; let not the tears of ſtubbornneſs melt you to an ill-timed compaſſion. Enjoin them nothing without mature deliberation, without ſufficient reaſon; let the juſtice, the allowance, the indulgence that is due to their age and weakneſs, be the rule of all your commands; but, when once you have delivered them, never think of a repeal, but abſolutely inſiſt on the moſt punctual and unreſerved compliance; and let neither headſtrong oppoſition, nor artful flattery, move you to the revocation of them. Beware, however, of iſſuing too many, or too different laws at once. You will thereby lay an inſupportable yoke on their

their necks, and, in ſome meaſure, force them to diſobedience; or you will convert them into timorous ſlaves, waiting with the utmoſt impatience for the moment when they may miſuſe their freedom without reproof or obſervation. Leave therefore every thing to their own inclination, which is in itſelf indifferent, and can have no prejudicial influence on their morals; and amuſe yourſelves at times in furniſhing them with uſeful ſuggeſtions and reaſons by which they may determine for themſelves. Imitate God in this, who is the legiſlator of us all. How much has he left to our option! and how greatly has he thus facilitated our obedience to his commands! The neglect of this rule is the principal cauſe that ſo few children ever learn obedience. If we will be always heaping command upon command, and ſettle, as it were, every geſture, every word, every look, every motion of the child, or the youth, by law, we ourſelves cannot be at-

tentive to all theſe commands, and muſt of neceſſity paſs over many tranſgreſſions of our laws in ſilence; and by this means all the reſt of our laws and ordinances, even the weightieſt of them, loſe all their force, and diſobedience becomes habitual.

Farther: inſpire your children with a predominant love for truth, for ſincerity, and generoſity. Theſe qualities are all natural to them; you have only not to ſuppreſs them; you need only maintain them. Therefore never make ſport of their innocent ſimplicity. Take heed leſt by ſo doing you train them to diſſimulation, to falſehood, to flattery. A deplorable neceſſity will teach them, in time, not to ſay all they think; but woe to them, and to you, if they learn to ſay the reverſe of what they think. The man who has been brought up in his childhood and youth to falſehood, to diſſimulation, to flattery, to whom theſe vices have been recom-

recommended as the weightieſt rules of prudence, and of refined manners, will almoſt always become either a noxious or a very troubleſome and diſagreeable member of ſociety. He will thence inure himſelf to cunning and deceit, and in his dealings with others will not ſcruple to make uſe of every trick and device he can think of which is not expreſſly forbidden by law. He will be very fluctuating in his judgments, and will commend and revere to-day what yeſterday he condemned and deſpiſed. He is liberal in his teſtimonies of courteſy and aſſurances of friendſhip even to prodigality, and yet thinks of nothing leſs than the performance of them, unleſs he be driven to it by neceſſity or ſelf-intereſt. He will never dare to oppoſe himſelf to unjuſt and corrupt undertakings and actions, if they are contrived and carried on by perſons whom he has learnt baſely to honour. He will, finally, be incapable of true friendſhip, which not

only abhors all falſhood, but diſlikes even reſerve: and what a comfort of life, what pure ſatisfactions, is he thus kept a ſtranger to! Do we not even daily complain of the very faults and imperfections of ſocial life I have juſt been ſpeaking of? Why then ſhould we propagate them to the future generations of men? Why are they recommended to children and young perſons as good qualities, and as virtues? Why ſo frequently impute it to them as a crime when they ſpeak the truth, or on any ſubject diſcloſe the thoughts of their heart? Why praiſe, why reward with particular regard and affection, when they extol and repeat whatever they ſee and hear for the ſake of inſinuating themſelves into the good graces of others? Oh, avoid all theſe too common faults, you who are parents and tutors. Train up your children, not to be ſervile flatterers, but to be nobly-thinking men, who know how to value themſelves, who love truth above all things, and never

are ſhy of ſpeaking it whenever their duty or the advantage of others requires it; and believe it, that no upright, ſincere, honeſt-hearted man ever lamented that he was upright, ſincere, and honeſt-hearted, that he was a foe to all diſſimulation and flattery.—On the other hand, however, ſeek to preſerve your children from prating and babbling. Teach them, in their judgments and diſcourſes, to proceed with conſideration and reſerve. Shew them how much uneaſineſs we may cauſe this way to ourſelves and others; and how diſagreeable a man muſt be to company, when he ſeems determined to be the only ſpeaker, and wearies their attention with all the ſentiments and tranſactions he can recollect, whether good or bad, without diſtinction. Accuſtom them to ſecreſy in regard to ſuch things as duty forbids them to reveal. Entruſt them at times with a ſecret; and let the manner of their procedure with it be the rule of the greater or ſmaller de-

gree of confidence with which you ſhall afterwards honour them.

III. Train them, farther, as early as poſſible, to diligence, to order, and to induſtry in their affairs. Repreſent to them how equitable and reaſonable it is, that every one ſhould make the beſt uſe of his talents, of his abilities, of his time, and of his goods; and how unjuſt it would be, to have himſelf aſſiſted by ſo many other men, without granting them all poſſible ſervice and help in return. Shew them how intimately all mankind are connected together; how much one man has need of another; and how advantageous it is for each in particular, and for all in general, that they ſtrive with ſocial ardour to promote their mutual welfare. Teach them how much a man facilitates his buſineſs by order; how much eſteem and confidence it acquires him from others; how richly at laſt unabated induſtry rewards him; what

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an excellent means application is found to be for preſerving a man from ſins and follies, and from the inſupportable burden of languor of mind; and how pure, how great the pleaſure of the diligent is, when he reflects on the work he has finiſhed, on the difficulties he has thus overcome, and on the utility he has procured by it to himſelf and to others. Would you deeply impreſs theſe maxims on your children, and precede them therein with your example; would you keep them conſtantly employed in ſome uſeful occupation, as much as their age and their powers allow; adapt every matter to its proper time, and ſee that all they have to do and to provide be done and provided with due preciſion: then will the love of order and diligence by this means become natural to them; they cannot thenceforward be other than orderly and diligent; they will not in future regard the affairs of their calling as a grievous burden, and poſtpone them to every

every fleeting pleaſure; and hence they will be far more ſecurely preſerved from indigence and penury, and rendered far more uſeful members of ſociety, than by your leaving them never ſo great riches, with the contrary diſpoſitions.

IV. Fourthly, be very careful to bring them up to humility and modeſty, which are ſo becoming in all men, and principally in children and young perſons, and at the ſame time are ſo neceſſary for the advancement of their perfection and happineſs. Praiſe them not on account of ſuch privileges as they have not themſelves acquired, but are indebted for them merely to their birth or ſtation; and allow not others to inſpire them with high notions of their deſcent, or of their opulence. Teach them to conſider all ſuch as honour and extol them on theſe accounts as baſe flatterers, or as ignorant and ſelf-intereſted men, who either think quite differently from

what they ſpeak, or are endeavouring by this means to ſerve their own private ends. Shew them how little real value theſe outward diſtinctions have, how eaſily they may be loſt; how much they oblige their poſſeſſor to an eminently good and generally uſeful conduct; and how deſpicable they render him, if he either miſapply them, or be ſtill leſs virtuous and uſeful than another who has not ſo many means, nor ſo many incitements thereto. Neither, however, muſt you plume yourſelves on theſe advantages; deſpiſe not the poor and needy, and honour only wiſdom, and virtue, and integrity, let them be ſurrounded with the glare of proſperity, or accompanied with want and miſery. Give them modeſt thoughts likewiſe of their natural or acquired endowments, diſpoſitions, abilities, and virtues. Teach them how ignorant and feeble man is in and of himſelf; how dependent he is in all reſpects on the will of the great Author of nature; how ſoon,

ſoon, and by a hundred accidents, he may be hurled down from the dangerous height to which he has climbed. Teach them, how imperfect and inſignificant the greateſt human knowledge and virtue is; how likewiſe in this reſpect the major part is obtained from inſtruction, from education, from outward circumſtances, and all ultimately from the Providence of God. Shew them how far they are excelled in all theſe matters by ſo many others, who probably have had fewer aſſiſtances and encouragements; and how much they have ſtill to do, for becoming ſo wiſe and good as they may and ſhould become. Exerciſe them in meekneſs, principally then when they think themſelves affronted, or when they have not met with that reſpect and honour to which they imagine they have a right to pretend. Remind them then of their own infirmities and failings, of their deficiency of all actual merit, of the great indulgence they themſelves ſtand in need

of

of from others, of the unconcern with which moſt men think and act. Make them comprehend, how eaſily a man, even without any bad intention, without being of a malicious diſpoſition, merely from imprudence and indiſcretion, is liable to ſay or do ſomething that ſhall diſpleaſe another, and is ſuſceptible of a very bad interpretation; and ever beware of rendering their little differences of importance, by your taking too great a part in them, and treating them as things that highly deſerve attention, or that bring your own honour in queſtion.—Exerciſe them much rather, on all occaſions, in reconcilement and magnanimity. Inſtead of addreſſing them, as it but too frequently happens, in ſuch terms as theſe—"This is what you muſt never put up with, you muſt not let that paſs unrequited, unfriendly behaviour ſhould be returned with the like"—much rather let this be your advice: "You ſhould be above regarding ſuch trifles; they are

not worth your notice, much leſs your uneaſineſs; think yourſelf happy if you are wiſer and better than another; and pity ſuch as are leſs wiſe and good than you, but hate them not."—In this manner let not your children live long in diſſatisfaction with each other, or with other perſons. Shew them, rather, how irkſome and unpleaſant ſuch a ſituation is, and of how much pleaſure and advantage it deprives them. When any difference has ariſen, bring them together, and repreſent to them how inſignificant the ground of their diſagreement is, and how eaſily they might have ſeen that themſelves, if they had more deeply inveſtigated the matter, and not have taken it up in ſo much haſte. Abſolutely forbid them all revenge, even when the object of it is only an animal or ſome inanimate thing; and teach them, as ſoon as they are able to comprehend it, that only the ſentiment of guilt and weakneſs excites revenge; but that conſcious

innocence

innocence and force are displayed in magnanimity.

V. Endeavour to inspire them with a sincere affection and hearty good-will towards all mankind, without distinction of rank, of religion, of country, or of outward fortune. Teach them to regard all men as their brethren, the small as well as the great, the poor as well as the rich; to treat man as man, that is, as a reasonable and immortal creature, and their outward circumstances as accidental things. Impress upon them deeply the natural equality of all men, that they may not be dazzled by the glare of power, of rank, or riches; that they may neither be beguiled into meanness or obduracy, into pride or cruelty. Never allow them to speak of vulgar, low, and mean people, and to accompany what they say with contemptuous looks and gestures. These expressions are criminal in the mouth of every

every ſenſible man; they are the off-ſpring of error and vice: but in the mouth of a child or a youth, they are folly and abſurdity itſelf. If your children or your ſcholars are accuſtomed to uſe theſe expreſſions, then ſhew them, that the perſons whom they term vulgar, low, mean people, poſſeſs far greater merit, and are far more important and uſeful members of the commonwealth, and conſequently deſerve more reſpect and honour than they; and that it is ſtill very uncertain whether they themſelves may not, by their own ill-conduct or even by unmerited misfortunes, be reduced to that ſame low claſs of men, and ſee themſelves forced to ſeek compaſſion and relief from thoſe whom they now, without foundation, think ſo baſe. Watch carefully, in this reſpect, over their behaviour towards the ſervants. Think it no ſubject of connivance, if they treat them with ſcorn, with arrogance, ſpeak to them in a haughty tone of command, and

aſſume

aſſume the hard and ſelf-conceited maſter, whom it is their duty implicitly to obey. Teach them, on the contrary, to acknowledge the value of the ſervice the domeſtics adminiſter to their weakneſs and inexperience, and to acknowledge it with thankfulneſs; inſpire them with liberal and beneficent ſentiments towards them; and if they dare to command them in your preſence, then do you ſee that their commands are not executed.—Preſerve them likewiſe, in their earlieſt years, from the coldneſs, from the envy and the animoſity, which difference of nation and religion is but too apt to cauſe among mankind. Teach them, that it is not the apparel, not the outward manners and uſages, not opinions, but character and conduct, that fix the true value of men; that inſtruction, education, and accident, have a great ſhare in the opinions and the belief of the generality of mankind; that no one errs on purpoſe, or rejects the truth, as

truth; that more depends on doing than on knowing; that man is not condemned for error, but for vice; that every one ſhould follow the dictates of his conſcience, even though they ſhould be erroneous; and that there is no reſpect of perſons with God; but, that in all nations, he that feareth him and worketh righteouſneſs is accepted of him.

VI. At the ſame time lead them to compaſſion and beneficence. But would you frame their hearts to theſe virtues; then repreſent them not only as very beautiful and noble, but teach them actually to know the various kinds of want and miſery under which ſo many of their brethren ſigh. Lead them at times into the ſad but inſtructive abodes of the poor, the ſick, and the dying. There let them form a compariſon between their condition and that of ſo many others who have the ſame nature with them, and probably are more deſerving

deſerving than they. Let them ſee the haggard looks and hideous figure, the hard couch and the hard bread, of the wretched and indigent, and hear their piteous groans. Keep them not at a diſtance from ſuch affecting ſights, for fear of ſhocking their delicate nerves, or cauſing them painful ſenſations. Theſe ſenſations are the glory of human nature. Rejoice and be glad when they appear in your children; let them give full ſcope to their pitying tears; conceal not from them your own; and ſhew them by your example, that you are not aſhamed of theſe honourable tears even in your years of manhood. But then ſhare with them likewiſe the pleaſure of beneficence and relief you afford to the needy and forlorn. Conſult with them at times on the beſt means of adminiſtering comfort. Repreſent it to them as a peculiar honour you do to their good behaviour, that you take them with you in this or that work of Chriſtian love. Ac-

cuſtom them to give up ſomewhat of their pleaſures or conveniences to it, that they may feel the neceſſity of it the more, and that its impreſſions may be more laſting. Make them underſtand betimes that the beneficence which coſts us nothing, or conſiſts only in giving away what we could not uſe ourſelves, what was totally ſuperfluous and unneceſſary to us, that this beneficence is of no great value, that it cannot be any virtue. Reward them then even for their beneficence, not by making them preſents, but by partaking in the joy of the poor and the neceſſitous whom they have relieved, of the ſick whom they have reſtored, of the ſorrowful whom they have comforted, and by acquainting them with what fulneſs of heart they bleſs their benefactor.

VII. Teach them, farther, to deny themſelves, and to maintain the command over their ſenſual deſires. In this reſpect

likewiſe connect practice with precept, and begin with both of them as early as poſſible. This is a matter of the utmoſt importance for creatures like us, who are partly ſenſual, and partly rational. He who has not learnt in his early years to reſiſt his ſenſual appetites, will find it exceſſively difficult in his riper age, if not abſolutely impoſſible, to make thoſe ſacrifices to duty and virtue, which in the preſent ſtate of diſcipline and exerciſe are ſo frequently demanded of us. Therefore, habituate your children, or thoſe that are entruſted to your inſpection and guidance, willingly at times to deny themſelves ſome innocent pleaſure, or to break off from the enjoyment of it, and thereby to demonſtrate the ſtrength of their mind, and the maſtery they have of themſelves. In this article likewiſe precede them by your example. Appoint certain pleaſures, or diverſions, which you intend to enjoy in company with them; enter heartily into the ſport with

them; and then, if ſome duty or accidental circumſtance, which you yourſelf however have perhaps occaſioned, interrupt the enjoyment of theſe pleaſures, or call you from them, then ſhew them immediately, by your unruffled complacency, and by an affectionate admonition, how far you prefer your duty to all pleaſures, and how good it is for a man to know how to bridle his deſires, and to command himſelf. Pray them, on this occaſion, to exerciſe themſelves in theſe noble virtues, or at leaſt to embrace this opportunity of giving you an unequivocal demonſtration of their love; and reward them who do it the moſt readily with a diſtinguiſhed eſteem and friendſhip. If it at firſt appear hard and burdenſome to them to do ſo much violence to themſelves, does it coſt them great trouble to refrain from tears, and from breaking out in loud complaints; let not this beguile you into any ill-timed pity, or make you haſten to remove the cauſe

cauſe of their lamentations. The oftener they adopt this wholeſome practice, the more light it will become; and they will at length put themſelves in a condition to make the moſt coſtly ſacrifices to virtue and integrity, without heſitation, as ſoon as their duty demands it of them.

VIII. Guide them finally to patience in ſufferings, to fortitude and courage in misfortune, to a ſteady and intrepid behaviour in all the circumſtances of life. Theſe qualities and virtues are indiſpenſably neceſſary to us in our preſent ſtate. He that has not learnt to ſuffer with calmneſs and ſerenity; he that allows himſelf to be ſhaken and overturned by every little accident; he who ſhudders and recoils at every menace, at every appearance of danger; will never attain to any high degree of moral perfection, and his happineſs is very liable to many and ſudden changes. Only the patient, the reſolute, the intrepid, is

capable of overcoming the difficulties that often come in the way of duty and integrity, of oppoſing the torrent of prevailing depravity, and of preſerving his innocence as well as his peace of mind in all the viciſſitudes and temptations of outward fortune. To theſe virtues, however, we muſt be early led; we muſt learn firſt to practiſe them in trifles, if we would uſe them in an advanced life, and more important matters. Do not therefore content yourſelves with recommending theſe manly, theſe noble virtues, to your children or your pupils, but exerciſe them in them on all occaſions. Let not the love you bear them miſlead you to render their taſte too delicate, to ſpare them from every thing that is troubleſome and unpleaſant, and to accuſtom them to ſoftneſs and effeminacy. Inure them much rather to a hardiſh kind of life, ſo as that none of the conveniences of it may be ſo neceſſary to them, that they cannot be deprived of them

them without being wretched. Do they meet with any trifling miſchance; muſt they ſuffer ſome hardſhip or pain; do they loſe ſuch things as they valued much; do not increaſe their ſenſibility to the event by the extravagant and anxious concern you take therein, by the clamorous complaints they fall into on the occaſion, by the extraordinary buſtle you put yourſelf in, and all about you, to conſole them in their diſaſter, to make good to them their loſs, and inſtantaneouſly to remove their very tolerable pains. Give not ſuch things as are of no great conſequence a greater importance in their eyes than they really have, by the manner in which you judge and treat them. Rather ſeek by your calmneſs to quiet them, and by your ſedateneſs to inſpire them with courage. Teach them to hold every matter for what it actually is; diſcourſe amicably with them on the nature of the evil they ſuffer, of the pain they feel, of the loſs they have

have undergone; ſhew them to how many evils and calamities man is ſubject, and how much he may bear and ſuffer if he will. Bring them examples of perſons who have ſuffered far more than they, and were yet patient and firm; and, inſtead of terrifying them by calling their attention to all the poſſible bad effects of their preſent misfortune, teach them by degrees to obſerve the various uſes a wiſe and virtuous man may draw even from the adverſities that befall him. But give efficacy and vigour likewiſe to theſe doctrines by your own example. Bear the afflictions you meet with yourſelf with patience; let them never hear any murmurs and bitter repinings againſt the divine Diſpenſations proceed from your mouth; ſhew them by your own behaviour, that you can be tranquil under tribulations, and meet with ſettled fortitude a danger which you cannot avoid. Preſerve them, laſtly, as much as poſſible, from all impreſſions of fear and

terror

terror ariſing from ſuch things as only ignorance, or ſuperſtition, or melancholy, or ſlaviſh notions, have endued with a frighful and terrific appearance. Shew them theſe things whenever an opportunity occurs; make them acquainted with them, and lay before them in the livelieſt colours the imbecillity and miſery of thoſe who are conſtantly dreaming of dangers, and are encompaſſed with horrors on every ſide.

Theſe are the principal virtues to which children and young people are to be trained, and in which they muſt be conſtantly exerciſed. Would you, whom God has eſtabliſhed as parents, or preceptors, or teachers, firmly and faithfully follow the rules I have here laid down, put in force the exerciſe connected with them frequently, and in the propereſt methods, and never be weary in imploring God for his bleſſing; then certainly your labours will

not

not be in vain; they will, ſooner or later, produce rich fruits of wiſdom and virtue in the hearts and in the conduct of ſuch as are placed under your inſpection and care. Your children, your ſcholars, will be habituated to obedience and ſubmiſſion, to ſincerity and the love of truth, to diligence, to induſtry and order in their affairs; they will be humble and modeſt, will love all men as their brethren, ſeek their ſatisfaction in doing good, govern themſelves, and deny their violent ſenſual appetites; they will learn even patience in afflictions, firmneſs in misfortune, and conſtancy in dangers. And how wiſe, how good, how happy muſt they be, in this amiable fellowſhip of the moſt beautiful and the moſt noble virtues! How much muſt theſe virtues exalt the luſtre or ſupply the defect of outward privileges! How well-pleaſing will they be to God, and how agreeable to mankind! how uſeful to their brethren! How much more calmly

calmly and contentedly will you leave them hereafter, when you know that they have theſe virtues, and with them all the reſt, as the guides and companions of their lives!

OF

OF TRAINING UP CHILDREN TO RELIGION, AND TO CHRISTIANITY.

Ye fathers,—bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

EPHES. vi. 4.

OF TRAINING UP CHILDREN TO RELIGION AND TO CHRISTIANITY.

THE moſt faithful obſervance of all the precepts and practices we have recommended to you, in ſeveral diſcourſes on forming the minds and the hearts of children, will not be ſufficient for completing the grand deſign of a rational and Chriſtian education, unleſs it be connected with as exact and careful an introduction to Religion and to Chriſtianity. Only by that means will theſe precepts and practices be truly uſeful and important. Only by that means will the underſtanding of the man be formed to true wiſdom, and his

heart to true, to the nobleſt virtue. Only by that means will he be capable of the ſupreme, of an eternal felicity. The fear of the Lord, ſays the holy Scripture, that is wiſdom; and, from the fear of the Lord, to depart from evil, that is underſtanding. And in fact, without that clear and certain light which Religion and Chriſtianity hold before us on the moſt important objects, without the ſtrong conſiderations by which they inſtigate us to what is right and good, without the force they impart to us for diſcharging our duty, it would go very bad with our wiſdom and virtue; they would be like a building, which, if not upon the ſand, would certainly reſt on no ſolid foundation; we ſhould continually run the hazard of confounding ourſelves in our concluſions, and of being cheated and miſled by our ſenſes, by our imagination, or by our paſſions; but few, for I will grant every thing that can in this reſpect be granted, but few would be wiſe and virtuous;

tuous; and even theſe few would not proceed ſo far either in wiſdom or in virtue, as a Chriſtian, who does honour to the appellation, may advance in both. Nothing then is of greater neceſſity than that children and young people ſhould be conducted betimes, and in the beſt manner, to Religion and Chriſtianity, if they are to be rendered as wiſe, as good, as generally uſeful, and as happy, as they are capable of becoming. This is likewiſe what the apoſtle Paul inculcates upon fathers, or in general to parents, when he ſays: "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That is, form them into ſcholars of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; inſtruct them in his doctrine, exerciſe them in obedience to his commands, and in the imitation of his example; ſo bring them up, that they may become his true diſciples and followers, that they may be ſincere and enlightened Chriſtians.

My deſign at preſent is to give you, by the divine aſſiſtance and bleſſing, ſome direction to this end; a direction the more neceſſary, as the generality of parents and preceptors are ſo negligent on this important article of education, and as the miſtakes committed herein are the more various and common. Nobody denies that children and young people ought to be brought up to Religion and to Chriſtianity, and that much depends on this matter; but what is done towards the fulfilling of this duty? They are firſt to learn by rote ſome, for the moſt part, difficult and unintelligible forms of prayer; after this, a ſhorter or a longer ſyſtem of church-doctrines, with a number of matters, for the greateſt part, very obſcure; their memory is ſtrained, and with much labour made to receive things which they do not at all underſtand, ſo as not unfrequently to render theſe matters irkſome and hateful, inſtead of their being taught to prize and to love them.

After

Afterwards, theſe ſubjects are explained to them, which they believe they already underſtand, becauſe they can talk of them; and this is generally done in ſuch a manner, that they are more convinced of their dependency and ſubjection, than of the importance and excellency of the matter whereof they are inſtructed. During this, they are at times admoniſhed, though uſually by the bye, and in much too general a manner, to fear God, and to be devout; this is taken to import frequenting the public worſhip, and occaſionally to bring home a paſſage of Scripture they heard the preacher repeat, or ſome general head of his diſcourſe, without any more concern whether they underſtood any thing of the ſermon, and applied it to their inſtruction and improvement, or not. And then it is thought, that all has been done which Chriſtian parents can and ought to do, for bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But

does it require much obſervation and ſagacity to perceive the imperfection of ſuch an education in Religion and in Chriſtianity? and does not daily experience teach us, how inſufficient all this is towards forming children and young people into real Chriſtians? No; to train up children and young people to Religion and to Chriſtianity, implies, not only to inſtruct, or cauſe them to be inſtructed, in the contents of this ſacred doctrine, in a manner proportioned to their age and capacity, but likewiſe to make this doctrine, and Jeſus Chriſt who taught it, reſpectable and amiable to them; to form their mind upon the model of his, and to endeavour to lead them to the obſervance of his precepts, and the imitation of his example. This is what all parents and preceptors ſhould propoſe to themſelves as their ultimate aim, not only in the hours immediately ſet apart for inſtruction, but alſo in the whole of their intercourſe with ſuch as are under their care,

and

and in their whole behaviour towards them, if they would properly comply with the apoſtolical command in the text. For promoting the attainment of this deſign, I ſhall collect together, under the five following heads, what is to be obſerved herein.

I. The firſt is this: Inſpire your children or your ſcholars, from their earlieſt infancy, with a prepoſſeſſion in favour of the truth and importance of Religion and Chriſtianity. I do not mean to ſay, that they are to fear GOD, and to be Chriſtians, from mere prepoſſeſſion. No; they muſt examine the merits of Religion and Chriſtianity for themſelves, when they are arrived at the full uſe of their underſtanding, and be ſure of their faith upon principles. But, ſince they were born and live among Chriſtians, much depends on the firſt impreſſions they receive of the nature of the Chriſtian doctrine; and theſe impreſſions

contribute very much to render the inveſtigations they ſhall hereafter make eaſy or difficult to them. And who can blame parents or teachers, who have actually gone through theſe inveſtigations themſelves, and have in conſequence become true Chriſtians from conviction, who have known and experienced the holineſs, the comfort, the divinity, of their Religion; who can blame them, if they teach their children or their ſcholars alſo to ſtudy it on that ſide? Nay, who would not charge them with inconſiſtency of conduct, if they did not act thus? If I know that any matter contributes to my improvement, my comfort, and my happineſs, it is impoſſible for me to repreſent it as an indifferent thing to the perſons whoſe welfare I have at heart: I muſt neceſſarily give them advantageous ideas of this matter, if they are not yet in a condition to judge of it from their own ingenuity and experience. Do ſo then in regard to Religion and Chriſtianity,

tianity, you who are employed in the buſineſs of Chriſtian education. Your children, your ſcholars, have a great opinion of your underſtanding, of your ſagacity, of your wiſdom and prudence in the choice between good and evil. What they ſee you conſtantly to eſteem and love, that will readily gain their eſteem and affection. What they ſee you reſolutely reject and abhor, that will ſoon attract their contempt and abhorrence. What you treat with neglect as an indifferent thing, that will they not eaſily purſue with ſolicitude and zeal. Oh, would but all parents and preceptors conſider of this, how much more happily would their labours ſucceed! But what impreſſions, what ideas of Chriſtianity muſt your children, your ſcholars imbibe, if they cannot diſcover, either from your words or your works, that you conſider it as an important, as the moſt important of all concerns! if they ſeldom or never hear you ſpeak of GOD, of Chriſt,

or

or of Religion! if they hear you ſpeak of them without earneſtneſs, without complacency, or even with contempt! if they hear you make them your ſport, or honour others with your approbation while they deride them! if they ſee how readily you yourſelf, under every pretence of urgent affairs, neglect both public and domeſtic worſhip, and how glad you are when you have caſt off theſe duties as a burden to you! What can they, I ſay, conclude from ſuch a conduct, but that Religion is either an indifferent or a grievous and irkſome buſineſs? And how little in general will all the remonſtrances you afterwards adduce to reform their ſentiments be able to effect, againſt the influence of your example? Would you then communicate to your children or your pupils a prepoſſeſſion in behalf of the importance and truth of the Chriſtian Religion; then let them ſee that you yourſelf are aſſured of it. Be not aſhamed to diſcourſe with them,

them, or, in their preſence, with others, of God and divine concerns. But this is never to be done without earneſtneſs, without reverence, without tokens of inward delight. Shew your abhorrence, without reſtriction, of every thing that militates with theſe diſpoſitions. Haſte with joy to the place where the worſhipers of God aſſemble in his ſervice. Let it appear how much you are diſtreſſed when any thing happens to prevent you from it. See that it be no ſmall matter that hinders you from the celebration of private worſhip; perform it in company with your children, as ſoon as they are capable of ſome attention; and do it ſo as that they may ſee that you reckon this kind of employment and recreation far much more momentous and noble than any other. This will certainly make ſalutary impreſſions on your children or your ſcholars; and it will be impoſſible for them afterwards to treat with levity, or to reject without the ſtrong-

eſt proofs, a matter which they have always ſeen you revere as ſomething ſo important and ſo holy.

II. A ſecond rule, which is cloſely connected with the former, is this: Teach them from their earlieſt infancy and youth to know Religion as the beſt and ſureſt means for becoming virtuous and happy; and do this, not ſo much by argument, as by your own example. Shew them, on one hand, by your wiſe, moderate, upright, beneficent, and Chriſtian conduct, how fitted Religion is to form its votaries into good, pious, uſeful men, and citizens, and fathers of families, and friends. To this end, tell them occaſionally how hard it would be for you to do or to omit this or that; to refuſe ſuch an advantage, to take upon you ſuch an incumbrance, to withſtand this temptation to evil, or to conquer that difficulty in doing good; if Religion did not impart to you, by its doctrines and

and promiſes, power and eagerneſs thereto; if you had not before you the precepts and the example of your Saviour, who has deſerved ſo much of you and of the whole human race; if you conſidered not yourſelf as a man deſigned for another and a better life; and how eaſy theſe views and expectations make it to you now, even then to follow your conſcience, and even then to fulfil your duty, when neither can be done without denying yourſelf many earthly advantages. Shew them however likewiſe, on the other hand, by a ſteady and chearful behaviour, by the conſtant ſerenity of your mind, by the ſtability of your confidence in God, by your patience in afflictions, by your contentedneſs under diſappointments, how conſolatory Religion is, and what happineſs it confers upon a man. Do this principally in caſes when you are moſt in need of its comfort and aſſiſtance, and experience them in the happieſt manner. Converſe with your children,

dren, with your pupils, on theſe events, and ſhew them what a bleſſed influence Religion has on your repoſe. This is certainly an excellent means of making Religion venerable and amiable to them. Were you, for example, when you have been calumniated, when you have been ſeverely and unjuſtly blamed, when your beſt actions have been imputed to bad deſigns, and, inſtead of the well-earnt praiſe you expected, you are puniſhed with reproach; were you to ſhew yourſelf calm and diſcompoſed in the midſt of your family, with the approving teſtimony of your conſcience, and under the perſuaſion that GOD knows your deſigns, and accepts your conduct; then would your children learn to look more at the judgement of their reaſon than at the judgement of the world, and to prefer a good conſcience, and the approbation of GOD, to all the applauſes and panegyricks of mortals. Are your lawful deſigns defeated, is your induſtry unrequited, your prudence

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fruſtrated, your hopes annihilated; then let the contentedneſs and chearfulneſs of mind you ſtill retain be a leſſon to your children of the force of Religion upon you. Then ſay to them: "I have done my duty, I have done it with all poſſible exactitude, I have been wanting in nothing that depended on me for reaching my good deſign; but I had no certainty that I ſhould attain it. I know that all depends on GOD, and is directed by him. Now I ſee that my views were not his views; but I am aſſured that his views are always good—are always the beſt. At preſent, indeed, I cannot perceive it; probably hereafter by experience I may. I was an inſtrument in his hand; I have acted according to his will as far as I knew it. Upon the whole, this muſt always be attended by good effects, though they be not exactly ſuch as I expected from it. Probably I have been ſowing ſeed that will only begin to ſhoot upward after ſome years are elapſed, and bear

bear fruit when I am no longer here." Were you, on theſe and the like occaſions, to call the attention of your children, your ſcholars to them, and thus, in a manner, by ſuch diſcourſes and examples, to give a ſubſtance and a form to the power of the doctrine you confeſs; then of neceſſity a Religion which is productive of ſuch effects, which keeps its confeſſors ſo ſatisfied and chearful in ſuch circumſtances, muſt gain their affection and eſteem, and they will at all times ſeek vigour and comfort there, where they know that you have ſo often and ſo copiouſly found it.

III. Their hearts once thus prepared to hearken to the voice of Truth and Virtue, the peculiar inſtruction you ſhall give them from the doctrines of Religion will far more happily ſucceed; only it muſt be conducted in a manner adapted to the nature of the ſubject, and the capacity of the ſcholar. I will compriſe the moſt important

tant that are to be taken into conſideration, in the third rule or obſervation. It is this: Do not begin the inſtruction you give children concerning religion with the moſt difficult and exalted myſteries of it. This is not only to labour in vain, but may even do much miſchief. It is in vain to attempt it, becauſe theſe doctrines, even in reference to what may be comprehended and explained, are far too high for the apprehenſion of a child, or the firſt years of youth. And is it not an idle employment to communicate words to children, of which they think as little as if they were borrowed from a quite foreign tongue? But it is not only idle, but likewiſe hurtful to do ſo. The child thereby accuſtoms himſelf to be ſatisfied with words inſtead of things, and to miſtake a readineſs in pronouncing certain expreſſions and phraſes in a certain connection, for actual knowledge in ſcience; and this, in a thouſand other caſes, muſt foreclose to them the way that

leads to truth. This is not all. Every inadequate procedure muſt neceſſarily weaken the eagerneſs of their deſire for acquiring a knowledge of Religion; for nothing but the pleaſure ariſing from ſatisfying the curioſity can keep up this eagerneſs of deſire. But this pleaſure, and this gratification of the curioſity, muſt abſolutely fall to the ground, and give place to diſguſt and loathing, if things are forced upon them and maintained which they abſolutely cannot underſtand. Nay, how eaſily may this bad method of teaching beget doubt and unbelief with increaſing years! How eaſily may Religion become ſuſpicious to the youth who begins to reflect upon her, if he ſees her in ſo gloomy a garb, if he find in his memory more incomprehenſible words and expreſſions than clear or plain ideas! Would you avert theſe perils from him; then make the doctrine of the myſteries of Religion the laſt part of your inſtruction. Then the ſcholar will at the ſame time

reflect

reflect upon himſelf, will ſtudy himſelf, and ſoon diſcover unfathomable depths in the nature and connexion of his ſoul and his life. He will at the ſame time acquire ſome knowledge of the powers and effects of nature, and ſoon experience how impenetrable the darkneſs is in which it is involved. In ſhort, he will find myſtery enough in ſuch matters as theſe, the reality whereof he cannot deny. And then it will make no repugnant impreſſion upon him, when he ſees that Religion contains likewiſe doctrines that have their clouded ſide, and whereof we can acquire but a very imperfect knowledge.

Begin therefore your inſtruction with what is moſt eaſy, and moſt adapted to the apprehenſion of a child or a youth. Make them, in the firſt place, attentive to their manifold wants, and to the means for ſupplying them which nature and ſocial life have put into our hands. Help them to

remark their feelings, their wiſhes, and propenſions, and to diſtinguiſh them from each other; teach them to compare them with the things that are without them, and with the feelings, the wiſhes, and propenſions of other men; bring them to the knowledge of their dependent and feeble condition, and the connexions in which they ſtand with the things that are without them, and thence deduce the principal duties of morality which relate to themſelves and their neighbour. Make it comprehenſible to them by example; and let their own heart pronounce upon what is right and wrong, proper and improper. Shew them farther the moſt affecting beauties of nature. Teach them to underſtand the properties and ends of the principal creatures; endeavour to give them ſome conceptions of order, of art, of wiſdom: diſplay, as it were, before their eyes, the riches men find on earth for their nouriſhment, their conveniency, and their pleaſure;

ſure; rejoice over it with them; and then tell them, without any extenſive and learned demonſtration, that there is an inviſible Being, a God, who produced and upholds all theſe beauties and goods. They will immediately feel the force of this truth. It has its foundation in the wants of our intellect and our heart; and they both will ever riſe up againſt any objection that may be brought againſt it, if they be not entirely ſpoiled. Repreſent this God to them, not as an auſtere lord, and an inexorable judge; but as a father, full of care and affection for all his creatures, who is continually ſhewing them more kindneſs than the tendereſt parents ſhew their children; who, however, has no blind affection for them, but requires of them a chearful obedience for their own advantage, and whoſe favour is no otherwiſe to be obtained but by doing what is right and good. Inform them next, by recurring to their own ſenſations, wherein they ſtand indebted to

this Sovereign Being. Say to them, for example, at times: "I ſee that thou loveſt me, my dear; for thou knoweſt the greatneſs of my love to thee, and how earneſtly I intereſt myſelf in thy welfare. Shouldſt thou not then much rather love our common Father in heaven, whoſe tender Providence ſuſtains both thee and me? From him alone have I the means and the deſire to do thee good. Thou thinkeſt it thy duty to confeſs my benefits with gratitude. Out of gratitude thou endeavoureſt to render thyſelf agreeable to me. Thou neglecteſt many things becauſe thou knoweſt they would diſpleaſe me. Thou doſt many others, becauſe thou art aſſured that I have a pleaſure in them. Shouldſt thou not then likewiſe behave thyſelf towards him from whom all things proceed, and without whom thou and I ſhould not exiſt and live?" In this manner would you convince your children, or your ſcholars, very eaſily of the juſtice and reaſonableneſs of our principal

duties

duties towards God, and might enable them early in life to fulfil them. Remind them that heretofore, when men had long ſhamefully miſuſed all the bounties of this God, and loſt him and their duties quite out of their ſight, inſtead of puniſhing and exterminating them from the earth, he ſent Jeſus Chriſt to them as his ambaſſador, to inſtruct them in what they did not know, and to ſupply them again with means of eſcaping the puniſhment they deſerved, and of becoming wiſe, and good, and happy. Repreſent to them the virtues of the Redeemer in their brighteſt colours; deeply imprint the likeneſs of his moral excellence upon their ſouls; tell them how holy and beneficent a life he led, how much mankind are indebted to him, how perfect and happy he will render them even after death, if they obey his laws, and follow his example; what an exceeding delight God had in what Chriſt did for us, and what a delight he will alſo have in us,

if we do our utmoſt, in our ſtation and calling, to ſhew the ſame perſevering integrity which our Saviour teſtified in the proſecution of the work that was given him to do. Proceeding thus, you lead them to the doctrine of immortality and of the future life, which you will naturally repreſent to them as the only true comfort to man in affliction, as the ſureſt ſupport of his hopes. Give them to ſee their conduct in this world as the foundation of their portion in the other, and accuſtom them ſo to regard, and to uſe, and to prize the preſent, as its connexion with the future requires. Your inſtruction being framed in this or ſome ſimilar manner, will contain nothing that is not level to the capacity of a child or a youth, which will not agreeably employ his underſtanding and affect his heart; nothing that does not tally with his own feelings, and which he may not apply in various inſtances to his daily behaviour; and thus will Religion be important,

portant, venerable, and amiable to him. And when this is the caſe, then will it ſtrike deep root in his heart, and ſtand out every ſtorm, misfortune, and doubt; it will bring forth the faireſt fruit, and render him wiſe and happy indeed.

IV. The more ſucceſsfully to promote this deſign, ſtrive, in the fourth place, to awaken in your children a lively ſentiment of their entire dependence upon God, upon his will, upon his providence, and conſtantly to keep it alive. This is the principal ground of all true piety, the beſt ſecurity againſt wickedneſs, the ſtrongeſt incitement to good, and the richeſt ſource of peace. Happy they, who have been accuſtomed, from their earlieſt youth, to conſider all things in their dependency on the Great Firſt Cauſe, to have regard to God in all things, and to give ſuch a direction to their heart as that in all events it naturally lifts itſelf, without compulſion or violence,

violence, nay, with pleaſure and delight, to him in whom we live and are. How many temptations to ſin will ſuch an one without trouble overcome, by which he himſelf would have been vanquiſhed in any other diſpoſition of mind! How many peaceful and pleaſant hours will he enjoy, amidſt ſuch circumſtances, wherein others, who live remote from GOD, are excruciated with cares and ſorrows! Oh, ſtrive to procure your children, your pupils, theſe advantages, this happineſs, you who have the management of their education and nurture! Direct their view, in all the events that befall themſelves and others, to GOD, by whom and of whom all things are, and to whom all belong. Teach them to confeſs and to revere his ſupreme controul, his wiſdom and goodneſs, as well in ſmall things as in great. Preſerve them from that error which is ſo detrimental to our virtue and piety no leſs than to our comfort and joy, and which, though it do

not indeed entirely diſſolve our relation to the Firſt and Beſt of Beings, yet weakens it to an extreme degree; that God only regards the whole, and not the various parts of which it is compoſed; that he does not take notice of every particular creature, and provide for it accordingly; that he governs merely by univerſal laws, and never has a peculiar influence on our actions or our lot. Tell them frequently, when any thing agreeable happens, and they are rejoicing at it: "It is God, our common Parent, who cauſes theſe advantages to reach thy dwelling, who gives thee this cauſe for joy, and thereby affords thee a freſh teſtimony of his parental care and love. Oh, adore this bountiful Being, thank him for his unmerited goodneſs; and beware of forgetting ſo great a benefactor, or of refuſing him the obedience ſo juſtly his due." And likewiſe ſay, when any thing adverſe befalls them; when fear or ſorrow invades their heart: "Even this affliction,

fliction, this adverſe event, this danger, depends upon the will of him who rules and governs all things in heaven and on earth, who knows thee and loves thee too. Submit thyſelf to his will; it is always right and good. He knows how beſt to lead thee to wiſdom, to virtue, to happineſs. Honour him with ſtedfaſt confidence; reſign to him thy conduct; the end of it will certainly be ſalvation and bliſs, glory and joy." Thus will you bring up your children or your ſcholars to real devotion of heart. Thus will you beſt preſerve them from indifference and levity in regard to Religion. Thus will you habituate them, in the language of the Scripture, "to walk in the ſight of the Lord, to have the Lord alway before them;" and then will they, as the Pſalmiſt ſays, "never be moved;" i. e. they will allow nothing to turn them aſide from the way of duty and virtue, and even in the midſt of tribulation and danger will be calm and undiſmayed.

I have

I have here a ſhort remark to make, particularly relative to prayer, which undoubtedly is an excellent means for cheriſhing in us the ſentiment of our dependence upon GOD. Very little children are not capable of this exerciſe of piety and devotion; and if we accuſtom them to it, before they can have the ſlighteſt conception of a Superior Being, we accuſtom them to pray without the underſtanding, and to conſider the whole buſineſs as a matter of mere ceremony. Be ſure, however, even when their intelligence and their reflection begin to appear, when they make the firſt ſteps towards riſing in idea to an Univerſal Father of mankind, an inviſible and powerful Benefactor, when they already know ſomething of Jeſus Chriſt, as the greateſt Friend of man; even then, I ſay, be ſure that you teach them neither long nor difficult prayers; that you do not keep them to this exerciſe by compulſion, and puniſh the neglect of it by ſevere correction.

rection. Go before them at times by your own example; take advantage of the moments when they are in the moſt ſerene and chearful temper, when they are diſpoſed to ſerioufneſs and reflection, or when they are ſtrongly affected by particular incidents; repreſent prayer to them as a glory and as a happineſs of mankind; accuſtom them early, but without compulſion, to expreſs their thoughts and feelings briefly and ſimply in their own words; teach them to attend to the good they daily enjoy, to the wants and defects they have, to the faults they commit, and to make theſe obſervations the ſubject of their prayer: thus will they gradually become rational adorers, and have a reliſh for this ſacred practice. And never imagine that it is out of the reach of children to pray without forms preſcribed and learnt by wrote. Nothing more is neceſſary to it, than that you give them at times ſuch ſuggeſtions as are adapted to their age and com-

comprehenſion. Aſk them, for example, in the morning, when they are about to pray, whether they are not glad that they are ſtill alive and in health; whether they do not wiſh likewiſe to be preſerved all day from every accident; whether they have not a deſire to learn and to do ſome good to-day, and to behave themſelves as obedient children and ſcholars towards their parents and preceptors, &c. and then teach them to turn their thoughts and feelings into a ſhort prayer in ſome ſuch manner as this: "I rejoice, my dear heavenly Father, that I am ſtill alive, and ſtill in health! I thank thee for my life and for my health! Continue thy watchful Providence over me this day, to guard me from every thing that may be hurtful to me. Grant that I may neither ſay nor do any harm, that I may readily obey my parents and inſtructors, faithfully diſcharge my duty, and ſo become more intelligent and good from day to day, that thou

mayeſt

mayeſt have a gracious pleaſure in me! &c." Avoid herein the too common practice of making them repeat the LORD's Prayer daily, and probably more than once: it is in general too difficult for them to comprehend; and by this daily repetition, they will often, very often, repeat it without attention and without devotion.

V. Finally, endeavour to inſtruct your children, or your ſcholars, betimes in the true aim of Religion and of Chriſtianity. Imprint it deeply on them, that the Chriſtian doctrine is a practical doctrine, a doctrine of truth to happineſs; that it is not inſtituted merely for gratifying our curioſity, and enriching our minds with various ſorts of knowledge which we could not otherwiſe have acquired, or not without great labour and pains; but, by means of this knowledge, to improve and to tranquillize our heart, and to maintain a becoming conduct. Tell and convince them that

that it relates more to doing than to knowing; more to living than to believing; and that the beſt Chriſtian is not he who knows the moſt, who can deliver the doctrines of Chriſtianity in the plaineſt and juſteſt manner; but he whoſe mind and conduct is in the cloſeſt harmony with the mind and conduct of Jeſus Chriſt, the founder of our Religion; who has improved them the moſt in humility, in gentleneſs, in the love of God and of mankind, in beneficence, in patience, in ſelf-denial and contempt of the world; and that ſuch a Chriſtian mind, ſuch a holy life, are the beſt means for rendering Chriſtianity reſpectable to its deſpiſers and foes. Guard them betimes againſt that deplorable rage for damning and curſing which is continually gaining ground in the Chriſtian world, by teaching them that all they who confeſs Chriſt for their Lord, take his doctrine upon them, and declare themſelves his followers, by obedience to his commands, are actually ſuch, whatever

difference there may be among them in rites and opinions. Remind them conſtantly of the expreſs declarations of Chriſt and his Apoſtles: "Obedience is better than ſacrifice; he that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me; ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you; circumciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of GOD; in Chriſt Jeſus only that faith availeth which worketh by love; faith without works is dead." To this end, repreſent Religion to them conſtantly on the practical ſide; and account nothing as a part of it which can neither contribute to our improvement nor our quiet. Shew them what influence every doctrine, every precept of Religion ſhould have on our ſentiments and behaviour; what comfort its promiſes ſhould give us in all the events of life; and remind them of theſe things on all occaſions. Aſſiſt them in making the application of them

to

to the particular circumſtances they are in at the time. Would you, for example, ſubdue the pride of their hearts; then aſk them, whether this is conformable to the ſpirit of Chriſt? and hold up to them the pattern of his condeſcenſion and meekneſs. Do they find it difficult to ſuppreſs their reſentments; then lead them to gentleneſs by repreſenting to them how much the degrading paſſion of revenge is in oppoſition to the character and the calling of a Chriſtian, and how manifeſtly contradictory it is to every thing that Chriſtianity teaches and enjoins. Are they addicted to impetuous tranſports of anger and wrath; then call them to the mild and patient Jeſus, and teach them, to their confuſion and amendment, to compare the injuries he bore with patience with thoſe they have to undergo. Accuſtom them, above all things, to have the example of Chriſt continually before their eyes, and to aſk themſelves frequently: What would my Saviour have

determined on—what would he have done —how would he have behaved—if he were in my ſituation? how would he have regarded this or that matter? what judgement would he have paſſed upon it? what impreſſion would the flatteries with which I am beſet, or the ſcorn with which I am treated, have made upon him? This, this alone, is true Chriſtianity; and if you train up your children, or your ſcholars, to ſuch a frame of mind, to ſuch a conduct, you "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," you make them real Chriſtians, you place them in a condition of becoming capable of an eminent degree of perfection and happineſs both in the preſent and in the future world.

What a joyful proſpect for parents who love their children! for preceptors and teachers, who are convinced of the dignity of their office, and the ſacredneſs of their duties! What labour will not be eaſy and

pleaſant to them, while they are indulging the hope of reaching this aim! What an honour to form upright and faithful diſciples for Chriſt our beloved Redeemer, and thereby to enlarge the limits of his kingdom! What a conſiderable benefit to the preſent and the future generations of mankind! And what a raviſhing joy, what an inexpreſſible recompence will it hereafter be to thoſe parents, to thoſe preceptors and teachers, when they reſort again with their children, or with thoſe who were intruſted to their care, in the celeſtial abodes, in the regions of bliſs, when they ſhall receive their thanks for the fidelity wherewith they diſcharged their truſt, and hear from ſeveral of the bleſſed: "All hail to thee, for thou haſt delivered my ſoul; thou haſt kept mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling!" O God, what happineſs can be equal to that of the deliverer of a human ſoul!

GENERAL

OBSERVATIONS

ON

EDUCATION;

AND

RULES

TO BE

OBSERVED THEREIN.

Ye fathers—bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Ephes. vi. 4.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON EDUCATION; AND RULES TO BE OBSERVED THEREIN.

SOME time ago we delivered to you, in ſeveral diſcourſes, inſtructions relating to rational and Chriſtian education. We pointed out to you how the underſtanding of children is to be cultivated; how their heart is to be allured to the love of goodneſs; how they are particularly to be trained to the primary virtues; and how they are moſt ſucceſsfully to be brought up

up to Religion and to Chriſtianity. Theſe articles we have endeavoured to lay before you, in their natural connexion, as completely as we could without running into a prolixity that would have been unfavourable to attention. But this field is ſo fertile in profitable conſiderations, that we have reſolved to give it ſtill a little gleaning before we finally leave it; and to this end we ſhall devote the preſent hour.

We will make ſome general remarks on education, and put you in poſſeſſion of a few rules to be obſerved therein, which will facilitate to you the obſervance of the precepts already delivered, and may encourage you to the firm and faithful diſcharge of this truſt. This will at the ſame time afford us an opportunity of extending and confirming ſeveral of the reflections and propoſitions which in the foregoing treatiſes could only be curſorily delivered; and I hope you will readily grant me your attention

attention yet once more to a matter in all reſpects of ſo great importance. There are five or ſix principal rules and obſervations which I now intend to preſs upon you.

I. The firſt is this. Frequently conſider what ſpecies of creatures they are in the educating and forming whereof you are employed. You are not to conſider them either as merely animal or as merely rational creatures. On the ſcale of exiſtences man ſtands between the animal and the angel. He is neither to be degraded to the former, nor elevated to the latter. But ſenſuality and reaſon are in him to be brought into conſonance, and both are to tend with one accord to the attainment of the end of his being. If then you ſet no bounds to the ſenſual appetites of your children; if you allow them peremptorily to judge of the value of outward things by the impreſſions they make on their ſenſes;

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if you train them to obedience and duty merely by ſenſual pleaſure or diſpleaſure; if you govern them only in a capricious and deſpotic manner; you then forget the dignity of their nature, and, in all probability, they will never riſe, in their ſentiments and diſpoſitions, far above the irrational creatures. If, on the other hand, you require of them in the years of their youth the gravity and ſedateneſs of an aged philoſopher; if you impute to them every defect of conſideration and reflection as a crime; if you expect them conſtantly to act upon the moſt accurate principles; if you forbid them every innocent puerile ſport, and endeavour to render them at once inſenſible to every thing that acts upon their ſenſes in an agreeable or a diſagreeable manner; if you keep them conſtantly to the ſevereſt ſelf-denial; you forget the weakneſs of their preſent condition, you forget that they are human creatures, whoſe glory does not conſiſt in inſenſibility

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or the extirpation of their ſenſual appetites; but in the ſovereignty over them to be gradually acquired. Oh, ſhun both theſe extremes with equal care, if you would qualify your children for reaching the deſign of their being. Teach them neither fooliſhly to pamper and cheriſh their body, nor unneceſſarily to mortify and torment it. Teach them to attend to it as an eſſential part of man, but never to treat it as the part of greateſt importance. Let them enjoy, in playful mirth, the beauties of nature, the comforts of ſocial life, the pleaſure of moderate activity and freedom, and all the harmleſs joys of their unthinking age; let them likewiſe, for their future caution, feel the pain brought on by accident or their own imprudence; ſtrive not vainly to eradicate their natural propenſity to pleaſure, their inherent deſire of applauſe, of honour, of tranquillity, and freedom; but ſeek to temper them wiſely, and by degrees to direct them to the worthieſt

thieſt kinds of pleaſure, of applauſe, of honour, of tranquillity, and freedom. Teach them, by their own experience, and that of others, to diſtinguiſh appearance from reality, and to connect the preſent with the future. Cultivate their underſtanding in proportion as their ſenſes grow more active, and become ſuſceptible of more lively impreſſions; let diſſipation and reflection, recreation and labour, gaiety and ſerioufneſs, take place of each other in due rotation; and frequently give occaſion to ſuch actions of virtue and beneficence as may draw forth the whole ſenſibility of their heart in generous emotions. Thus will you treat them as creatures partly ſenſual and partly rational; and thus will you ever be bringing them nearer to the true deſtination of man, whoſe reaſon is not given him for extirpating his ſenſual appetites and inſtincts, but to rule and govern them.

II. Another principal rule in education is this: Endeavour by the beſt means to keep up a due reſpect towards you in your children. On this uncommonly much depends, particularly in the firſt years of education; indeed I may ſay, every thing depends upon it. If your children are to be rendered wiſe and virtuous, then muſt they take many an important matter on your bare word, eſpecially in their earlier years, though they may indeed in ſome meaſure comprehend it; but the reaſon whereof, and its connection with other matters, they cannot yet perceive; they muſt take it, I ſay, on your bare word, and on that authority alone believe it to be true. They muſt learn to obſerve many duties, and to accuſtom themſelves to many virtues, the influence whereof upon their preſent and future well-being, and the well-being of the whole ſociety, cannot as yet be made ſufficiently plain and luminous to them. They muſt have ſome one to regulate

gulate their own judgement on the various and ſo often contradictory judgments they hear paſſed by others on the good or ill qualities of things, or on the value of certain actions, and which they know not how to compare together; in all theſe caſes, I ſay, they muſt have ſome one on whoſe ſentence they may ſecurely repoſe. They muſt, in ſhort, learn to obey, and frequently from mere obedience to deny their propenſities and forbear from pleaſure. But, can this be brought about, or will it be effected in a manner really beneficial to their underſtanding and their heart, unleſs you ſtand in great reſpect towards them, and are able conſtantly to maintain this reſpect? Few parents and preceptors, however, entertain any doubt of the neceſſity of this matter, as they all have ſelf-love enough to deſire reſpect and authority, and no one willingly parts with the command which he has, or thinks he has, over another. But the way in which this reſpect

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is acquired and maintained is not always the beſt; it is often faulty in a high degree; and a building that is raiſed on a bad foundation may eaſily be ſhaken, it may be demoliſhed by the moſt trifling accident. If you found your reſpect merely on authority and power; if you endeavour conſtantly, or at leaſt uſually, to ſupport it by a gloomy brow, by biting words, by arbitrary commands, by ſevere corrections, by an imperious, ſullen, arrogant behaviour; if you abſolutely require on all occaſions a blind obedience; if you puniſh every the ſlighteſt infringement of it with inexorable rigour, however various the cauſe and effects of it may be; then you will indeed ſpread fear and terror around you; your children, your ſcholars, will feel the weight of your authority, and will ſtand in awe of the diſagreeable conſequences of your diſpleaſure; but you will make ſlaves of them, impatiently ſubmitting to the yoke you lay upon their necks,

and ready to caſt it off as ſoon and as often as they think they may do it with impunity. Would you build your reſpect on a firm and laſting foundation; then ſee that your children, your ſcholars, imbibe a good opinion of you, that they have high notions of your underſtanding and of your integrity, that they even reckon you wiſe and virtuous, and happy by wiſdom and virtue, and that they have not the leaſt doubt of your aiming at their good. For giving them theſe opinions of you, it is not neceſſary that you praiſe yourſelf, and commend to them the eminent qualities of your mind and heart, or the worthineſs of your behaviour, in words; but it is good if another ſhould do ſo at times with diſcretion in their preſence, and in a manner natural and eaſy. Let them not only ſee nothing fooliſh, unbecoming, inconſiſtent, much leſs bad and vicious, in your diſcourſes and actions; do but follow the dictates of Wiſdom and Virtue yourſelf at

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all times, and in all reſpects, and, as much as poſſible, with a chearful countenance, on which no trace of conflict with yourſelf, or an inward repugnance to the ſuggeſtions of conſcience and duty appear. Conſider your children as attentive witneſſes and ſevere judges of your conduct; and rather fly from them with all ſpeed, when you have reaſon to fear, leſt any diſorderly paſſion ſhould get the better of you, or you ſhould be put out of temper in any ridiculous manner. Never pronounce on any ſubject without ſufficient knowledge of its merits, that you may not be reduced to the neceſſity of reverſing your judgment. Never act without good reaſons, that you may not be aſhamed of your actions, and may ſafely repeat them on like occaſions. Carefully conceal your own faults and infirmities from them, till their reaſon be ſtrong enough to venerate the voice of Truth and the injunctions of Virtue for themſelves, and without regard to

him who teaches them the doctrines of Truth, and preſcribes them the duties of Virtue. Let them, in fine, perceive how much you have their welfare at heart, how tenderly you love them. Rejoice with them in all the good that happens to them, and think it no diſgrace to take part with them at times in their innocent pleaſures. So wiſe, ſo virtuous, ſo amiable and prudent a deportment will infallibly give them the beſt opinion of you; and this opinion, ſupported by filial gratitude and affection, will ſhield them, on moſt occaſions, from every ſeduction to error and vice. The reverence they have for you will be ſolid and laſting; it will give force and energy to all your remonſtrances, your aſſertions, your precepts, and commands; it will prevent all hurtful doubt of the juſtice, the truth, the legality, and the reaſonableneſs of them; it will render the docility and obedience of your children, or your pupils, no leſs chearful than ſincere,

cere, and abundantly lighten to yourſelf the diſcharge of your duty.

III. A third principal rule in bringing up children is this: In the education of your children, follow ſome certain plan, or certain principles and rules, adopted on mature deliberation, and inflexibly abide by them as far as is poſſible. Since in the firſt periods of education, as I have already more than once obſerved, far more depends on conſtant practice in duty, and on the acquiſition of good habits, than on formal inſtruction; ſo a ſtrict uniformity muſt neceſſarily be obſerved therein, if you would have this exerciſe to be productive of ſkill, and theſe good habits to become natural and ſtrong. The neglect of this rule is one of the principal cauſes of the poor effects of much otherwiſe laudable pains, not unfrequently applied to this purpoſe. If the chief perſons employed in the tuition of a child are diſſonant in their

ſentiments, opinions, purpoſes, and principles, and this diſſonance is diſplayed in the preſence of the child, or iſſues in altercation and contention; or if even the ſame perſon, from want of ſettled principles, proceeds ſometimes one way, and ſometimes another, blames and puniſhes to-day what he yeſterday praiſed and rewarded, orders to-day what he yeſterday forbids, uſes to-day an immoderate ſeverity, and to-morrow an exceſſive relaxation and indulgence; then the purpoſes of education can never be attained; the judgment of the child muſt be always doubtful and wavering; his deſires and views be kept ever unſettled and contradictory; and the good confidence he naturally has in his parents and tutors muſt ever be growing weaker, and at length totally fail. And how can I give his powers a certain direction, which may facilitate his application of them, if he be forced to apply them ſo often to oppoſite and conflicting matters? How can I make his duty agreeable, and virtue amiable

able to him, if he is one moment expecting reproof, at another praiſe, now reward, and now correction? Beware of theſe but too common faults, you that are entruſted with the buſineſs of education. Conſult frequently with each other upon it, ye fathers and mothers; conſult likewiſe upon it with all the perſons who may have any ſhare in the education of your children, or a remarkable influence on their manners. Impart to each other your obſervations and experiences; agree upon certain fixt principles, and rules of demeanour, to be obſerved among you, and follow them with invariable preciſion. Contradict not yourſelves; contradict not each other; much rather concur in mutual ſupport; build upon the ſame foundation; work by the ſame plan; ever give each other the hand; and be aſſured, that ſuch uniform and harmonious endeavours, though they ſhould even be faulty in ſome reſpects, will execute far

more than others, which, though even better in themſelves, are yet ſubject to many alterations and many contradictions.

IV. Fourthly, be firm and unwearied in the proſecution of your well-concerted plan, and let neither difficulties nor ſlight ſucceſs divert you from it. Flatter not yourſelf with the hopes of completely attaining your beneficent aim in the compaſs of a few months or years. Do not expect that every good ſeed you caſt into the earth ſhall immediately ſprout upwards, and bear fruit at your appointed time. It may frequently lie long concealed in the earth; it may ſeem to be totally dead; and at length continued culture, or ſome unexpected favourable circumſtance, ſhall reſtore it to life, and reward your patience with the hopes of a bleſſed harveſt. Many leſſons of wiſdom muſt be repeated a hundred times before the teacher ſhall be able to deliver them in a way ſuited to the comprehenſion

prehenſion of his ſcholar. Many a bad habit, many a froward trick, muſt be attacked a hundred times in vain, before it abates of its force, and gives room to attainments of a contrary caſt. Many a virtue muſt as often be recommended without effect, till at length it appears in the light, and preſents itſelf to the child, or the youth, in the form that moves his heart, and gains his eſteem and love. Intelligence and ſenſibility are frequently very late in their appearance, and then ſhew themſelves at once in ſo much vigour, as more than compenſates for all the previous attempts that were ineffectual to call them forth. Wiſdom, and Virtue, and the Fear of God, are prerogatives not to be produced at once, and not to be preſerved without pains: they are ſovereigns that muſt long diſpute the field with Folly and Vice before they can get the command of our hearts. Seize every opportunity to aſſiſt them in the conqueſt; never be weary of

of engaging the enemy till he is tired out with your oppoſition, conſtantly calling to mind, that the years of childhood and early youth are only adapted to ſowing, and not to reaping. Let the unſucceſsful effects of your labours make you ever more attentive to yourſelf, to your pupils, and to every circumſtance, even to the leaſt; but let them not render you diſpirited and weary. Look for the cauſe of it rather in the erroneous manner in which you proceed, than in the impoſſibility of happily ſucceeding; and let not your ſelf-love prevent you from rectifying theſe errors as ſoon as you diſcover them; ſo, however, as that this alteration in your method be not very conſpicuous, leſt it ſhould diminiſh the confidence your pupils have in you. Call yourſelf frequently to account for the diligence and fidelity you exert in this employment; converſe upon it with your friends, and make uſe of their ſagacity and experience; and if ſtill, with

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the good teſtimony of your conſcience, you do not reach your aims, or but very imperfectly, then you have only to cheriſh the reflection, that you have ſtrained every nerve to do all you could with the means and faculties with which GOD has entruſted you; and that, under the government of a wiſe and gracious Providence, even every ſincere endeavour, though we cannot diſcern its ſucceſs, cannot be abſolutely loſt.

V. That you may not be diſheartened in this employment, frequently call to mind the manifold and great advantages you may derive to yourſelf in regard to your moral character, or your intrinſic perfection, from a rational and Chriſtian education. As long as we live upon earth, ſo long do we live in a ſtate of exerciſe and diſcipline. We are all to be educated to a better life, to a ſuperior happineſs; and this education ceaſes not till death. Here we can never ſay, that we are as wiſe, as good, as virtuous

tuous, as we may become; and woe to them who think, at any period of their lives, that they have reached that mark, and then take no more pains to aim at a higher perfection! Soon will they loſe the ground they have gained, and find themſelves again at the entrance of the courſe they had half completed. Parents, teachers, tutors, if you love yourſelves, and are deſirous of attaining to the end of your being, let the buſineſs of education to which you are bound, even in this reſpect, be precious to you. It is an excellent means for the advancement of your own perfection. While you labour with earneſtneſs and aſſiduity in forming the minds and the hearts of your children, or your pupils, you are at the ſame time procuring new advantages to your own; while you are endeavouring to make others wiſe, you are ever becoming more wiſe yourſelves; while you are labouring at the improvement of others, your own, you may aſſure yourſelves,

will

will not ſtand ſtill. The faults you obſerve in them will make you more attentive to your own, will ſhew them to you in all their alarming effects, and fill you with abhorrence at the ſight. The diſorderly appetites and paſſions, you endeavour to moderate and weaken in them, will render you vigilant to every attack of theſe foes to your happineſs and peace, and always ſupply you with weapons againſt them. The very dread you muſt always be under, leſt you ſay or do any thing in the preſence of your children that may make bad impreſſions upon them, will ſecure you from many a fault; it will lay you under a wholeſome reſtraint, and at length make the practice of the moſt arduous virtues habitual to you. What you now do only from compulſion and prudence, or from affection to your children and ſcholars, you will do in time from inclination and principle, from love to GOD, and a delight in virtue. Beſides, you will

find a thouſand opportunities for acquiring more knowledge of the human heart, and particularly of your own; for detecting its ſecret wiles and its diſhoneſt views; for applying the precepts of Wiſdom and Virtue more ſucceſsfully to yourſelf; and, by numberleſs exerciſes and maxims of prudence, rendering your duty more eaſy and pleaſant. What advantages! Can we ever too dearly buy them? Shall we have any reaſon to ſay, even then when our endeavours have not proſpered to our utmoſt wiſh in regard of others, that we have ſpent our ſtrength in vain, ſince it is apparent that ſo much at leaſt accrues from it to our perſonal advantage.

VI. Animate yourſelf frequently to diligence in the buſineſs of education by lively ideas of the importance of it. Above all things, let your own experience inform you of the great influence a good or bad education has on all the future years of life.

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Have you yourſelf enjoyed a good education; then often repreſent to yourſelf for how much you ſtand indebted to it; from how many faults and exceſſes it has preſerved you; how frequently already you have felt the force of the good principles you received from your parents or teachers, to your profit and delight; how much it has facilitated the diſcharge of your duties, that you were accuſtomed to them betimes, and that you were taught to combine them with the idea of pleaſure; how far you are advanced in this or the other rare and difficult virtue, becauſe you were exerciſed therein before you became acquainted with vice; how many allevitions and comforts have you found in adverſe circumſtances, and in the hour of ſorrow, becauſe you were taught rightly to judge of the value of things, and to prize and apply the conſolations of Religion; and aſk yourſelf then whether you do not wiſh your children the ſame advantages, and whether

whether you ſhall not make yourſelf the moſt juſt and moſt cutting reproaches, if by your fault they are forced to forego them?—On the contrary, have you had a bad or even no very good education; then frequently call to mind the diſadvantages that have ariſen to you from thence, and which probably ſtill ariſe. Say often to yourſelf, are not the faults I ſtill moſt frequently commit, and which I find the moſt difficult to reſiſt, the faults which were the leaſt oppoſed in my childhood and earlieſt youth, or treated as indifferent things by thoſe who had the care of my education? Are not the unruly paſſions which ſtill the moſt frequently carry me away, and moſt deſtroy my repoſe and happineſs, the ſame which were moſt indulged in my childhood and earlieſt youth, or even flattered and encouraged? Are not the precepts of Wiſdom and Duty, for the compliance to which I muſt now moſt conſtrain my inclination, the very ſame that I formerly was able

able to tranſgreſs without reflection, and without remorſe, and actually did tranſgreſs, becauſe I ſaw them tranſgreſſed without reluctance by thoſe in whoſe care I was placed? Are not the virtues which now coſt me moſt pains and conflict, and ſelf-denial to practiſe, the very ſame in which I was formerly ſeldom or never exerciſed? And ſhall I not do all that lies in my power to ſave my children all this pains, this ſtruggle, this conſtraint, this conflict with themſelves? to preſerve them from the cruel tyranny of evil paſſions? to make what is difficult to me eaſy to them? to render the narrow path of life, of virtue and happineſs, as ſmooth and pleaſant as it can be to them, and as now it would have been to me, if I had had a better education? Shall I give them cauſe hereafter to think on me with diſpleaſure, to groan under the ſad effects of my negligence, probably all their lives, and load me with deſerved reproaches for it?

Add reflection to what your own experience tells you on the ſubject, and let that likewiſe teach you the exceeding great importance of education. Repreſent to yourſelf how laſting the firſt impreſſions for the moſt part are which we receive of natural and moral things; how deep the firſt doctrines, principles, inclinations, and habits, whether good or bad, ſtrike root into the human ſoul; how great in particular the force of example; how much the underſtanding and temper of the childiſh, youthful, and manly age are dependent on each other, how they are grounded in each other, and how much then is effected by the firſt formation of the mind and heart. Frequently repreſent to yourſelf, that your children, your ſcholars, will ceaſe in time to be children or ſcholars; that they will ſhortly obtain the full uſe of their liberty, and be left to the management of themſelves; that they then enter into various connections with other men; that they probably

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ſill important poſts in the church, or the ſtate; that, in whatever ſtation they are placed, they have always a greater or leſs influence on the welfare of many others; that they probably may make thouſands either happy or unhappy, according as their temper and conduct ſhall be framed; and then advert to the important conſequences which a good or bad education may and muſt have in all theſe reſpects. Think on the great and laſting ſervice you afford by a wiſe and Chriſtian education to the whole of human ſociety, and compare it with the immenſe and irremediable prejudices you bring upon it by the omiſſion of this duty or negligence in it. Figure to yourſelf in particular the influence the education you give your children, or your ſcholars, will have on the education they will hereafter beſtow on their children or ſcholars; and tremble at the thoughts of committing errors, which the reverence wherein you are held will in a manner ſanc-

tify, and which may be even prejudicial to your children and their poſterity.

Place yourſelf, in fine, for giving more force and energy to theſe conſiderations; frequently place yourſelf in thought upon your death-bed; and there let your children and their off-ſpring be gathered around you. Aſk yourſelf, what at that time will contribute moſt to your repoſe and your comfort? Will it be the recollection of the multiplicity of diſſipations and diverſions you have ſhared in, to the neglect of their careful and Chriſtian education; or the thoughts on the continued and earneſt pains you have applied, to train up your children to virtue? Will it be the ideas of the riches and valuables you leave to your heirs, and the other outward advantages you have procured them; or the ſentiment of the wiſe inſtruction you have given, and the virtuous and pious example you have ſet before them? Would you then remain firm to the principles and

maxims

maxims you have communicated to them, and enjoin them with your dying lips what you have conſtantly recommended to them by your words and deeds? or would you then ſee yourſelf conſtrained to alter your language, to condemn your own principles and your own conduct, to warn them from the fatal influence of it, and to repreſent to them, as things which have miſerably deceived you, and are unworthy of eſteem and love, what you have taught them to eſteem and prize to the height of their affections? Which will render your parting from them moſt eaſy? If you can ſay to them, "I leave you in the poſſeſſion of treaſures, of honour, of power, of all the means to procure ſenſual pleaſures, and to gratify your paſſions?" or, if you are able to addreſs them thus: "I leave you wiſdom and virtue, and the fear of GOD, as the guides and directors of your life, and the grace of the Moſt High, and the hope of a bleſſed immortality, for your laſting com-

fort?" Oh, what reproaches, what anguiſh, what ſtings of conſcience, muſt neglected education cauſe to parents, or teachers, and preceptors, in the laſt days and hours of their life, on beholding their children, or their wards, through their fault, running the career of folly and vice! when they repreſent to themſelves all the dreadful conſequences their negligent conduct may produce in regard to their remoteſt, ſtill unborn, poſterity, and which it probably will produce! when they reflect on the account they muſt ſhortly give to the Omniſcient Judge of the world! when they tranſport themſelves in thought in the manſions of eternity, and have reaſon to fear that they ſhall there be accuſed by their children and deſcendants as the cauſe of their ruin! Can you conceive a more deplorable condition than this? —On the other hand, how vaſt muſt be the pleaſure, how raviſhing the joy, which muſt diffuſe itſelf through the ſouls

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of parents and teachers at their departure from the world, on ſeeing thoſe that were committed to their care proceeding on the path of Wiſdom and Virtue! when they contemplate them as good, uſeful, pious men, citizens, parents, teachers, magiſtrates, or ſubjects! when they think on the bleſſed influence of their ſentiments and example on the general happineſs of brethren! when they can conſider them even in the light of benefactors to the preſent and the future generations of men, and thence obtain the well-founded hope of being re-united hereafter in a better world with them who were the deareſt to them here, and of enjoying in their ſociety the fruits of their mutual integrity! What feelings! what proſpects! how glorioufly will they be recompenſed for all their pains and care! how richly will they be repaid for the vain and tranſient pleaſures they have ſacrificed to the diſcharge of their duty! Oh, may you all, who have any

ſhare in the buſineſs of education, or who are bound to purſue it, hereafter taſte the ſweets of this reward, and animate yourſelves now, by the ideas of it, to the moſt perſevering fidelity in the execution of this moſt ſacred truſt!

OF

OF THE

DETRIMENT AND DANGER

OF

TOO CLOSE A PURSUIT

OF

DISSIPATION AND DIVERSIONS.

Study to be quiet; and to do your own business. 1 THESSAL. iv. 11.

OF THE DETRIMENT AND DANGER OF TOO CLOSE A PURSUIT OF DISSIPATION AND DIVERSIONS.

THE deſign of my preſent diſcourſe is to warn you of the detriment and danger of too cloſe a purſuit of diſſipation and diverſions. May you attend to my warning voice with the ſame good and ſincere diſpoſitions as thoſe which actuate the heart from whence it proceeds! Think not that the reſtraints, under which we are laid in many reſpects by our ſtation and calling, render us envious of the greater freedom which you enjoy; or that we exhort you to a temperate uſe of certain kinds of recreations

creations and pleaſures, becauſe we muſt either ſhare in them but ſeldom, or wholly forego them. Were we diſpoſed to lead a ſoft, effeminate, ſenſual life, and to be more ſolicitous for our pleaſures than our duty, we ſhould be no more deficient in opportunities than you; and we might perhaps do it without any ſtriking violation of public decorum. No; neither envy, jealouſy, nor conſtraint, have any ſhare in the remonſtrances I ſhall make you. It is conviction, real conviction, grounded on reflection and obſervation; it is a ſincere and earneſt deſire of promoting your happineſs, that urges me to entertain you with ſuch matters as are much more important than they appear to you, and which are therefore but too ſeldom agitated as their importance demands. Vouchſafe me then an attentive hearing. Let not cuſtom, or prevailing faſhion, let not your propenſities and appetities, but let truth and the fear of GOD pronounce upon the momentouſneſs

neſs of my arguments and ideas; and if you find them juſt and cogent, then follow what your conſcience and the love you owe yourſelves ſhall dictate. The detriment and danger of too cloſe a purſuit of diſſipation and diverſions ſhall therefore be the ſubject of this morning's diſcourſe. We will divide it into three parts. In the firſt we will accurately define the matter of which we are ſpeaking; in the ſecond, ſhew the detriment and danger of miſuſing it; and, in the third, ſubjoin ſome rules of wiſe and Chriſtian conduct; conſiderations which will at once inſtruct us in the import and grounds of the Apoſtolical precept, "Study to be quiet, and to mind your own buſineſs."

By diſſipations we here underſtand all kinds of employments and pleaſures which draw off our attention from the duties impoſed on us by our ſtation and calling, and direct it to ſuch things as make us forget what is unpleaſant or difficult in theſe

duties, and procure us either a ſilent and placid repoſe, or awaken in us more agreeable ſenſations and ideas. Such diſſipations, or recreations, are more or leſs neceſſary to us all. Our powers are limited. They would be exhauſted by too vigorous and too continued exertions. Nothing, in particular, more wearies the attention of our minds than when we direct it to one and the ſame object for a conſiderable length of time. Nothing more fatigues our body than when it purſues too long one ſort of motion, or of mechanical labour. Relaxation of a longer or a ſhorter ſpace from our ordinary affairs is alſo requiſite, if we would preſerve our mind or our body, or both of them at once, from ſinking under the burden. This is not all. We thereby prevent not only various, and otherwiſe unavoidable evils, but we procure ourſelves the moſt important advantage. Nothing is properer to give new vigour to our minds and bodies than the enjoyment

joyment of an innocent and moderate pleaſure. It has the ſame effect upon us as the refreſhing dew upon a flower after drooping under the heat of the day. It inſpires us with new life, new ſpirits and alacrity to continue the duties of our calling, from the point where we left them off; and we are thus enabled to conquer difficulties without much pains, which otherwiſe would have conquered us, if we had combated them with too obſtinate an aſſiduity. Uſeful and neceſſary, however, as theſe diſſipations and recreations are, yet they may eaſily tranſgreſs the bounds of moderation; and ſince this but too frequently happens, our pains will certainly not be ſuperfluous if we ſearch for ſome rules whereby to judge of our behaviour in this regard.

I need not firſt remind you, that all diſſipations and pleaſures, wherein ſuch things are ſpoken or tranſacted, that in and of themſelves are bad and contrary to good

manners, are abſolutely to be avoided. To ſeek recreation in companies where ſlander and detraction exhale without reſtraint their peſtilential breath, where ambiguous expreſſions and indecent mirth ſupply the place of chearfulneſs and wit, where riot and licentiouſneſs prevail; to ſeek recreation in ſuch companies, is to look for health among the diſeaſed, and for life among the dead. I now ſpeak only of ſuch ſorts of diſſipation and recreation as are abſolutely indifferent and innocent, and the temperate uſe whereof is not unbecoming to the wiſe man or the Chriſtian. And when does a man go too great lengths in theſe? When does the uſe of theſe allowable diſſipations and recreations become abuſe? Probably many will immediately anſwer, when it is too frequent, and too often repeated. The anſwer is juſt; but it is too indeterminate, to give us much information, or to regulate ourſelves by it on all occaſions.

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The moſt innocent diſſipations and recreations are exceſſes, when ſought and uſed by perſons who have no need of any relaxation and recreation. Reſt is only ordained to the weary, reward only to the workman, medicine only to the ſick. Whereon then do you found your claim to recreations and pleaſures; you, who paſs your whole lives in inaction, and reprehenſible indolence; who exert neither your bodily nor your mental powers in the ſervice of your fellow-beings; who live ſolely for yourſelves, or rather for the terrene animal part of you, and not for others alſo? What have you then done for the good of ſociety, that you vindicate to yourſelves its pleaſures? What weighty affairs have you to tranſact, for which you muſt collect new powers? Unhappy men! you forget to what end you were made! you know no uſeful, no generous employment for your capacities and talents; and therefore apply them merely to trifles, and in the manly,

the beſt age of your life fall back into childhood. Time is a burden to you, becauſe you know not its value. Therefore you wiſh the days could be ſhrunk into hours, and the hours into moments. And what right have you to require ſo much diſſipation; you, who cannot indeed be peremptorily charged with idleneſs, but who ſhould and could do far more of what is good and uſeful than you actually do; you, whoſe buſineſs requires ſo little exertion, whoſe labour and induſtry are ſo moderate, that you are ſcarcely ever perhaps conſiderably fatigued and enervated by the ſedulous diſcharge of the duties of your calling? Would you, you who thus either lead a totally inactive and unprofitable life, or a life not active and uſeful enough, would you with juſtice, and without inconſiſtency, apply a part of your time to relaxation and recreation; then uſe the other part ſo as to render recreation needful. Turn firſt your whole attention

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to the important concerns that fall to your ſhare as men, as citizens, as Chriſtians; firſt, earneſtly exert your powers; firſt, labour faithfully and unremittingly; work at leaſt at times till you feel ſome degree of fatigue; and then ſeek innocent relaxation and recreation; then enjoy them with a chearful ſpirit. You have deſerved them; they are become neceſſary; and they will be real recreations to you.

The moſt innocent diſſipations and recreations will, ſecondly, be exceſſes, when by the manner in which they are uſed they ceaſe from being relaxations and recreations, and become either buſineſs or burdenſome. And this they will be, when they ſtrain too much the powers of the body or the mind; when they cannot be ſaid to procure us reſt, as a change of one kind of uneaſineſs and violent movement for another, probably ſtill more hurtful, eſpecially when they laſt too long, and are

protracted to fatigue. It is certainly an innocent and proper kind of recreation at times to enjoy with one's friends the ſocial repaſt, ſeaſoned with ſincerity and decent freedom, and in this enjoyment to be eaſy and chearful. But if this happen too often; if pomp and luxury, more than friendſhip, mix therein; if we are by various means allured, or are by our own weakneſs induced, to exceed the bounds of moderation; if it be thought a kind of honour or propriety to make it late in the night before we part; then we err in regard to this means of recreation; it is then no longer refreſhment, it is a heavy burden which enervates the mind and the body; and the following day but too often teaches us, that we have reaped no freſh alacrity and vigour for induſtry and labour. The ſame may be ſaid of play. Whoever has a taſte for this ſort of pleaſure; he who knows or can have no nobler kind of it, who would not otherwiſe be able to fill up his vacant hours,

hours, and runs no riſk of being diſcompoſed by irregular paſſion; may indulge in this pleaſure with due moderation, til he learns to think more ſeriouſly, and more conſiſtently with the dignity of the man and the Chriſtian. In the mean time, let him beware not to give ſo much into play that it ceaſe from being an innocent recreation. He that neglects for it that exerciſe which his body requires; he that makes it his purſuit unremittedly for ſeveral hours, and that frequently, perhaps daily; he who allows himſelf to be heated at it by the thirſt of gain, or from too eager a deſire to ſhew his ſkill, and to obtain the conqueſt; he who is ſo buſy and attentive at it as if he were occupied about a matter of the higheſt concern; with him play ceaſes to be a recreation; it is a toilſome, childiſh employment; it is exceſs. He thence collects no refreſhment to his powers, but ſquanders away in an

unworthy manner the very ſpirits that ſurvived his previous labour.

Laſtly, the moſt innocent kinds of diſſipation and recreation become prejudicial, when we ſo accuſtom ourſelves to them, that we can with difficulty bear a privation of them, or when we thereby loſe our taſte for more ſerious and more momentous things. In either caſe we miſs the only rational and lawful aim we could propoſe therein; I mean, the reſt that ſhould refreſh us after labour, and invigorate us for the proſecution of it. In the former caſe, if we ſo accuſtom ourſelves to certain diſſipations that we can ſcarcely endure their abſence, we unneceſſarily increaſe the number of our wants; and, ſince it is not poſſible for us to ſupply them at all times according to our wiſh, we thus expoſe ourſelves to various kinds of uneaſineſs and vexation, which in their effects are in direct oppoſition to the benefit we propoſe by

by recreation. In the latter caſe, if by too frequent a uſe of certain diſſipating pleaſures we loſe the taſte for more ſerious and momentous objects, we manifeſtly do ourſelves an injury, inaſmuch as we are thereby ſeduced to negligence and ſloth in attending to theſe important and momentous matters, or to a total heedleſſneſs and unconcern about them. We muſt, however, ſomewhat more circumſtantially ſhew the various harms that ariſe from the too frequent and inordinate uſe of even innocent diſſipations, and the danger attendant on it.

In the firſt place, as I have already noticed, the affairs of our vocation are too often neglected for it. A man accuſtoms himſelf to look upon them as incumbrances which he bears, and muſt bear, merely from neceſſity, and which he rids himſelf of as often and as ſpeedily as he can do ſo, without the moſt manifeſt diſadvantage.

Inſtead of attending to them with all poſſible aſſiduity and diligence, he preferably directs a part, perhaps the greateſt part, of his attention to the pleaſures and diſſipations he is running to meet. For enjoying theſe more frequently and fully at times, he leaves his moſt important buſineſſes to be tranſacted by others, who ſeldom manage, or can manage them with the ſame fidelity and prudence as the man himſelf. This holds good no leſs of the mother than the father of a family; of the merchant and ſcholar, as well as the artiſt and the workman; and ſuch a conduct in all conditions of life muſt be attended by more or leſs diſorder and confuſion; it muſt often be attended by the ruin of families; and this ſo much the more, as by the great ſhare he takes in all kinds of diſſipation and diverſions, and by the various connexions he enters into with others on theſe occaſions, he is commonly tempted to run into ſuch expences as bear no juſt pro-

proportion to the means he poſſeſſes, or the income on which he may ſafely reckon; or which, even if our outward circumſtances are not injured by them, prevent us from fulfilling the duties of Chriſtian bounty in their whole extent, and from doing ſo much good as we might and ſhould have done in a more contracted mode of life; a loſs that not only robs us in this world of the pureſt, the divineſt pleaſure, but alſo of the moſt glorious retributions in the future.

The too eager purſuit of diſſipations and ſocial pleaſures have, ſecondly, with very many perſons, a cruel influence on the education of their children. That the education of children is a matter of the utmoſt importance and arduous application, and that it is chiefly the buſineſs of parents, and not merely of tutors or ſervants, I take for granted as an undeniable propoſition; and if any man were

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ſo unhappy as to doubt it, I ſhould pity him with all my heart; but I ſhould give myſelf but little trouble to ſet him right, becauſe in all probability my pains would be loſt. Is it then your duty, you, whom God has ordained as parents, is it your duty, your moſt arduous duty, to educate your children, that is, to form their hearts and minds, and make them wiſe and virtuous; how can you fully comply with this duty, if you give full ſwing to your attachment to all faſhionable diſſipations and pleaſures; if you leave your children ſo often and ſo long from your ſight; if all this while you leave them to themſelves, or to the charge of others? I will allow, that the pleaſures you purſue are harmleſs. But, in the mean time, to what dangers are your children expoſed! Probably they are ſurrounded by perſons addicted to vice, who put on the maſk in your preſence, and wait with impatience for the moment when they need be under no reſtraint. At preſent,

ſent, the minds and the hearts of theſe innocents, whoſe welfare is ſo dear to you, lie open to every bad impreſſion, and there is no one by to guard them from ſeduction. Now probably falls the ſeed of ſome fault, ſome ill quality, or ſome vice, into their pliant hearts, which takes root in ſecret, and in time brings forth a deadly fruit. Now the faireſt bloſſoms of wiſdom and virtue, that already begin to expand, are blighted and withered by a peſtilential breath. Suppoſe, however, that they are not ſurrounded by vicious perſons, yet are they commonly by ſuch as have not the juſt and delicate ſentiment of what is true, and beautiful, and good, ſo neceſſary to the due formation of a youthful heart; who rarely are free from falſe maxims, from ſuperſtitious errors and prejudices of every kind, and who ſcarcely ever obſerve the exact propriety in their diſcourſes and actions which ſenſible parents obſerve in the

the preſence of their children: all of them circumſtances which cannot but be prejudicial to your children, and are often dangerous to them. And can you, in ſuch circumſtances, frequently and without neceſſity abſent yourſelves from your children; and without uneaſineſs and a ſmarting conſcience purſue idle diſſipations and pleaſures, which neither a concern for your health, nor the duties of real friendſhip, require at your hands?

A third evil that ariſes from an abuſe in this article, is, that a man thereby becomes inured to unworthy gratifications. I am not to be informed, that we are terrene creatures; that we cannot be ſolely employed on inviſible and ſpiritual objects. Yet we are not totally earthly. The better part of our being, the part of us that remains for ever, is not duſt; it is the offſpring of GOD; it is deſigned for a heavenly life.

life. If we make our labours entirely tend to what is earthly and temporal; if we are always buſied about ſuch things alone; if we even devote to them the little time that remains to us from our ordinary affairs; then muſt we of courſe become earthly-minded by inſenſible degrees. Our rational, our immortal ſoul muſt neceſſarily be injured much, be ever farther and farther turned aſide from its proper deſtination, and be ever more unfit for the ſuperior and heavenly life to which it is called. And how can too copious diſſipations have any other effects than theſe? Will not the attention of him who is attached to them be ſolely directed to ſenſual and outward things? Are not various preparations requiſite for appearing in great circles with propriety and advantage? By the frequentation of them do we not get the habit of ſetting a greater value on whatever belongs to dreſs, to decoration, to furniture, than they deſerve, and to hold them

them for more important things than they really are? Are they not the ſubjects of moſt converſations and diſcourſes? Does not the extravagant value that is had for them very frequently excite envy, jealouſy, and ſtrife? Do they not ſo univerſally prevail in moſt companies, as to make it not rarely a matter of offence to ſpeak of weighty, profitable, moral, and religious concerns, and cauſe ſuch ſubjects to be conſidered as incompatible with rational mirth? But is not ſuch a way of thinking pernicious in the higheſt degree? Does it not expoſe us to the danger of loſing ſight of God and Religion, and the end of our being, in ſhort, every thing that is great and noble? Does it not entice us to a hundred actions that degrade the man, and are contrary to the vocation of the Chriſtian? Does it not deprive us of all comfort in misfortune? Does it not render Death and Eternity, which yet we cannot ſhun, moſt dreadful? Is it not manifeſtly

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at variance with the temper that is to prevail in the kingdom of the juſt? And ſhall we not be rendered by it ever more unqualified for being received into their ſociety hereafter?

Hence, laſtly, it happens, that too intenſe a purſuit of diſſipation deprives us of the time neceſſary to the practice of private devotion, and gradually draws after it a coldneſs and indifferency towards all religion. Our knowledge, our faith, our hopes, our virtue, and piety, muſt be aſſiduouſly nouriſhed aud ſupported by the reading of Holy Scripture and other good books, by reflection and contemplation, by ſelf-examination and prayer, if we would have it to ſtand out the attacks of error, of unbelief, of doubtfulneſs, of diſappointments, and vice, and to render us wiſe and happy. To this end the public exerciſes of devotion and worſhip, how excellent ſo ever they are in the main, are not of them-

ſelves ſufficient. The chief part of what we have to mind in this reſpect muſt be performed in retirement. But do you perform this—and can you perform it—you, who ſo ſedulouſly run after all ſorts of diſſipation and pleaſure? Do you, at leaſt, apply as much time to the augmentation of your knowledge, to the improvement of your heart, to the invigoration of your faith, to the confirmation of your hopes and your piety, as you conſume in the gratification of your appetites for ſenſual pleaſure, or to what you term the duties of genteel behaviour, and the keeping of company? Do not frequently ſeveral days glide by, do not at times whole weeks paſs away, without one ſerious reflection that you are Chriſtians, and deſigned for eternity; without once examining the ſtate of your mind, and the courſe of your life; without paſſing one or more hours in conſiderations like theſe, which are profitable to your immortal ſoul, and may fit you for the

the life to come? No wonder, if, with ſuch a conduct, your faith yield to every objection and doubt, your virtue to every temptation, your hopes to every danger; if you dare not venture to manifeſt your veneration for God and Jeſus Chriſt to the face of the unbeliever, or in the preſence of the ſcorner; and, among the friends of vice, to maintain the cauſe of virtue. No wonder if you either become yourſelf a contemner of religion, and the ſlave of vanity and vice, or that you halt and waver between truth and error, and are continually running from good to bad, from one opinion to the other, without ever acting upon juſt and ſolid principles. Is not ſuch a condition, however, extremely hazardous? and have you not ample cauſe to regard, and to avoid, as prejudicial and ruinous, all that plunges and keeps you in it?

Theſe ſurely are conſiderations highly adapted to convince every reaſonable man,

that too frequent diſſipations are exceedingly detrimental to us, and that they are inſeparably combined with various perils. Should I be ſo happy as to rouze you to reflect on this matter, and to cauſe you ſome alarm on theſe injuries and this danger; then turn to your advantage the following rules of diſcreet and Chriſtian conduct:

Impartially conſider, at times, the emptineſs, the vanity, the irkſomeneſs, of moſt kinds of diſſipation and paſtime, on which however men in general ſet ſo high a value. Can you think ſo freely and uninterruptedly amidſt them—can you ſpeak ſo familiarly and frankly, and ſo ſafely appear in your natural frame, as you ought, if they were actually the refreſhment of your ſpirit? Do you not commonly feel yourſelf under conſtraint to watch with far more attention over yourſelf, and to obſerve all your words and geſtures,

geſtures, than in the moſt important affairs, if you would neither hurt any one, nor expoſe yourſelf to ridicule? Are you not very often reduced to the neceſſity of ſtraining all the faculties of your mind in the moſt unpleaſant manner, to fill up the vacuity of converſation by a thouſand frivolities? Do you not in many other inſtances feel many an irkſome conſtraint? In what kinds of diſſipation and paſtime may not the paſſions be called up, whether the love of lucre, or ambition, or anger, which are equally hurtful both to body and mind, and which conſequently have no right to the appellative of recreation and ſolace? And wherein at length conſiſts the ſo-much-vaunted pleaſure of the generality of great companies, the generality of public and private diverſions? All men eagerly run in queſt of this pleaſure, but no one finds it; and yet no one is honeſt enough to ſay that he has not found it, becauſe he is afraid of contra-

dicting the judgement of the reſt, and of being accuſed of a defective taſte. Therefore every one boaſts, againſt his conviction, of a pleaſure he has not enjoyed, or only in a low degree; and by theſe means alone are moſt kinds of diſſipations and amuſements ſupported in the unmerited reputation which prejudice, miſrepreſentation, and miſtaken ſhame, have conferred upon them.

Another rule of conduct is this: Often and ſeriouſly reflect on the ineſtimable value of time, and the extreme velocity of it. How much I pity the man who is for ever in ſearch of freſh means of paſtime! Time, alas! flies ſufficiently ſwift; it admits of no detention. And ſtill you want to drive it on! You want to give it a keener wing! Will you hold the ſame opinion, when once—and how ſoon may that happen!—when once the ſhort ſpace that is granted you draws near to its end! when you have

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no longer to reckon by years and months, but muſt count by days and hours? Will you likewiſe think thus, when you muſt firſt give an account to yourſelf, and then to the Judge of the World, of your employment of this time? Woe to him, who, on ſtriking the balance of his reckoning, finds that he has not beſtowed ſome of it at times to his neceſſary recreation; but has often daily laviſhed away large portions of his time in worthleſs impertinencies, and neglected to lay up a treaſure in heaven! I muſt ſpeak ſtill plainer. Woe to him who finds, on his death-bed, that he has paſſed almoſt every evening of his ſhort life, that is, almoſt all the time his buſineſs left him free, in idle companies, in unprofitable, and often ſinful converſe, in play, or in any other loitering way, derogatory to the dignity of the Man and the Chriſtian! What reproaches will he not make himſelf then! How much will he deplore his murdered time! How ardent-

ly, but how vainly, will he wiſh that he had applied the greateſt part, at leaſt, of his leiſure to weightier matters, in the improvement of his knowledge, in the practice of virtue and piety, in preparation for his life to come!

A third rule of conduct is this: Of all diſſipations and diverſions, chuſe for yourſelf ſuch as are moſt innocent and uſeful. I have not the leaſt intention to forbid you pleaſure in general, or ſocial pleaſure in particular. God and Religion require not this. But they will have us to make a prudent ſelection from among the various kinds of pleaſures we may enjoy. And herein allow me to give you ſome ſuggeſtions. The pleaſure of domeſtic life; the pleaſure which tender and rational parents find in converſations with their children, in the forming of their minds and hearts, and even in ſharing in their innocent joys and ſports; intercourſe with a few honeſt

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and upright friends, where, without reſtraint, without reſerve, we may hold profitable and pleaſant converſe, where we need not care if our ignorance or our frailties appear, and may ſhew ourſelves in our real frame, where even none will reproach us if our diſcourſe ſhould be dull; the peruſal of ſuch books as require no great exertion of mind, which have but little relation to our ordinary affairs, and may enrich us with many different kinds of knowledge, or ſtrengthen us in our generous and virtuous notions; the contemplation of nature, the mild and ſilent ſentiment of its beauties, which he ſhares with his friends, and elevates thereby; what pleaſures theſe! How pure, how innocent, how diverſified, how fitted to procure agreeable recreation to the mind, and new vigour to the body! Learn to underſtand and to enjoy theſe pleaſures, then no man need caution you of the abuſe of the reſt. I will, however, ſketch out to you ſtill a nobler kind of re-

creation. Viſit, at times, the forlorn, the poor, the indigent, the widow, and the orphan; not for ſatisfying your curioſity; but go to them with good advice and ſubſtantial ſuccours. Miſtake not this for a melancholy recreation. It affords to a generous, philanthropical heart, indeed not in all, but in moſt caſes, far more pleaſure than diſguſt; and the recollection of the good we have done by it, of the comfort and joy we have thus diſperſed abroad, will become an ever-during ſource of the moſt agreeable ſenſations.

Laſtly, be jealous of your real freedom. Let nothing make you ſlaves. No ſort of diſſipation and amuſement muſt ever become ſo neceſſary to you, that you cannot forego it without uneaſineſs and pain. You cannot tell but that your circumſtances may ſo alter that you muſt abſolutely forego it. The wiſe man, the Chriſtian, makes himſelf ready for all events; and even therefore

fore is his happineſs the ſureſt, and his pleaſure is ſubject to the feweſt alterations. Oh, ſtrive to be ſuch Sages, ſuch Chriſtians. Endeavour after the approbation of God and your Conſcience, as after the pureſt and richeſt ſource of refreſhment and peace. Conſider duty and pleaſure not as wholly different and conflicting things; but ſeek and expect true pleaſure chiefly from the delight and fidelity wherewith you fulfil your duty. Regard yourſelves conſtantly as foreigners and gueſts in this world, and judge and act at all times in the preſent in reference to its connection with the future. This, and this alone, will make you wiſe, and pleaſed, and happy.

THOUGHTS

THOUGHTS

ON

PUBLIC DIVERSIONS.

And it was ſo, when the days of their feaſting were gone about, that Job ſent and ſanctified them, and roſe up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job ſaid, It may be that my ſons have ſinned, and curſed GOD in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. Job i. 5.

THOUGHTS

ON

PUBLIC DIVERSIONS.

JOB is repreſented to us as a man on whoſe heart and conduct Religion had the ſtrongeſt influence, and who conſidered all he did himſelf, and all that others did, as it might be agreeable or diſagreeable to God. He hindered not his ſons and daughters from aſſembling on certain days for ſocial pleaſure; nor when there from giving themſelves up to a lively mirth; doubtleſs their joy and his own were the ſame. But he knew how eaſily the bounds of moderation may be exceeded; how ſoon ſenſuality in ſuch aſſemblies gets the upperhand of reaſon and conſcience. He knew, that there are no faults and exceſſes from which a man is ſecure, when once he loſes

God

God and his duty from his ſight. The pious father, therefore, when a day of feſtivity and diverſion was at hand, ſent to his children, and ſanctified, or prepared them for his intended ſacrifice, and then made his burnt-offerings, the following morning, according to the number of his ſons. For he thought within himſelf: "My children may have gone too far in their mirth, they may have forgotten God, and tranſgreſſed againſt him." And this was his conſtant practice. It was not enough for him, that he lived in the fear of God, and eſchewed evil, but he wiſhed and ſtrove all he could that his family might do ſo likewiſe. A noble example, highly worthy of imitation to all fathers and mothers, to all teachers and leaders of men! an example that I have purpoſed in that reſpect to lay before you. What Job did by ſacrifice, might I the rather do by inſtruction and perſuaſion, as on one hand we are juſt returned from the enjoyment of various diverſions

verſions and amuſements, and, on the other, are preparing for ſolemn acts of worſhip.

You know, from long experience, that I am no enemy to mirth and ſocial pleaſure; that I interdict you no kind of diverſion, ſo long as it is innocent and harmleſs; and am by no means deſirous of raiſing you to an imaginary perfection, of which the nature of man is not capable in its preſent condition. And how could I do ſo, without forgetting what the human creature is, and what ſpirit prevails in the Chriſtian doctrine?

Man is not merely body, but neither is he altogether ſpirit; not entirely of earth, but not entirely celeſtial; is adapted as well to agreeable, ſenſual feelings, as to ſilent, rational reflection; is not deſigned barely for a contemplative but to a buſy, not for a ſolitary but for a ſocial life. And why ſhould

ſhould he confine his ſenſations merely to himſelf? Why not expreſs and communicate to others his joy, his hope, his benevolence, his participation in the happineſs of other men, by words, by ſong, by geſture, and by various other ways?

And the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is a ſpirit of liberty and gladneſs. It is the province of Chriſtianity to improve and tranquillize our heart, to fill it with the love of God and man; and when it effectuates all this in us, we ſhall neither do any harm, nor ceaſe to be innocent and pious, whether we enjoy ſenſual or ſpiritual pleaſures; and when it does not produce this, when our hearts remain perverſe and evil, then the ſevereſt abſtinence, the moſt frequent exerciſes of piety, will nought avail; we ſhall be called Chriſtians, perhaps be proud of that name, and yet experience none of its power and its bleſſed effects.

At the ſame time, it appears to me highly reaſonable and fitting, that, at certain ſeaſons of the year, all public diverſions, all pleaſures of a certain kind, ſhould be ſuſpended, and that a greater retiredneſs and ſilence ſhould prevail; ſuch as in the preſent time of Advent, and during Lent. I well know that theſe reſtrictions are founded on no divine injunction, but are merely human ordinances; that theſe times are in and of themſelves no holier than others; that we acquire no merit in the ſight of God by abſtinence from any pleaſures; and that, at times, it is accompanied with a reſtraint that cannot juſtly conſiſt with Chriſtian freedom. It may alſo eaſily be, that ſuperſtition has originally had more ſhare in theſe ordinances than a regard to the moral utility they may be of. Had this view, and the knowledge of the human heart on which it muſt be founded, been the inducements to its

inſtitutors, I ſhould even at preſent bleſs their memories, and honour them as wiſe benefactors to their brethren.

However, be this as it may, it is good that there ſhould be times when men have leſs opportunity for diſſipation than uſual; when, by the greater ſilence that prevails in ſocial life, they may have more incitement and more leiſure to reflect; when he ſhall be induced, by the ſcarcity of certain pleaſures, to look about him for others, probably more noble and laſting, to make himſelf acquainted with them, and thus acquire a taſte for their enjoyment. Of this nature is the preſent ſeaſon. May we all apply it to that end!

Indeed, the time of Advent is no ſeaſon of ſorrow; it reminds us rather of the moſt happy, the moſt joyful event that ever happened, in the appearance of Jeſus in the world, and all the ſalutary revolutions

tions and improvements that have been effected by it among mankind, and are ſtill effected daily; but it ought ever to be a time of ſerious and calm reflection; and the more frequently we then betake ourſelves to recollection from the diſtractions of the world, the more we meditate on the happineſs and the bleſſed effects of Chriſtianity, and endeavour to experience its power and its comforts, ſo much the more joy will this ſeaſon certainly procure us, which we may then compare with other kinds of joy, and learn to prize them both according to their real worth.

For promoting this deſign, permit me now to give you ſome helps to ſuch ſerious thoughts, to reflections on the ſocial pleaſures and diverſions you have enjoyed, and on the ſuſpenſion of them, which will ſoon take place.

For I alſo, your friend and teacher, cannot entirely diſmiſs my concern: it may

be that they have ſinned, and forgotten the Lord their GOD!

Shrink not away from theſe reflections. They are not intended totally to deprive you of any joys, or to make you reproaches which you do not deſerve for having poſſeſſed them; but to rectify your judgment in their regard, and to make you, in their enjoyment, more moderate and diſcreet.

And how ought a man to enter on reflections relating to this! He may propoſe to himſelf divers queſtions in this reſpect; and the impartial anſwers to them will furniſh him with various reſults and rules, that may be of ſervice to him in his future conduct.

The firſt and moſt natural queſtion a thoughtful Chriſtian propoſes to himſelf, when he retires from the tumult of ſocial joys, is this: Are theſe joys that indeed

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for which they are commonly held? Do they completely anſwer the expectation a man forms of them?

If I look to the preparatives that muſt be made for them; to the avidity that meets their approach; to the honour and friendſhip thought to be ſhewn to thoſe that are permitted to ſhare in them; on the diſappointment and vexation that appears when a perſon is kept from them by accidental cauſes; if I look to the bright, contented countenances of all that enter ſuch ſocieties, and the manifold tokens of friendſhip which all the members evince to each other; every thing tells me how great, how general, the expectation of the livelieſt pleaſure is.

Neither is this expectation in fact ill-founded: here is no want of a variety of real pleaſure. To find oneſelf in a numerous brilliant company, where chearfulneſs and freedom reign; where it is not the

gravity of advanced years that gives the law, but the ſportive and complacent manners of the young and gay; where mirth and joy put on ſo many various forms; where each preſents himſelf to others on his beſt, his faireſt ſide, and gives a grace to every look and every movement of his perſon; where each does all he can to pleaſe the reſt; where the ordinary reſtraints of ſocial life are ſet aſide, and familiar, animated converſation takes their place; where conſpicuous beauty and addreſs obtain the ſuffrages of all; where every gloomy thought is chaced away by choral muſic and the feſtive dance, and every heart expands to agreeable ſenſations; in ſuch ſociety pleaſure, doubtleſs real pleaſure, may be expected and found, by all that are not totally inſenſible and indifferent to this ſpecies of it. Even the man of riper years, even the ſedate and grave philoſopher, who does not directly partake of them, ſo he have but a benign

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and complacent ſpirit, even he muſt rejoice on beholding ſo many of his fellow-creatures rejoicing, and in the midſt of the diſplays of their joy, ſtill keeping within the limits of moderation, of reſpect, and innocence.

True, however, as all this is, yet the reflecting man, on coming home to his retirement, has ſtill cauſe to aſk his heart: But have then theſe joys and diverſions afforded my expectations a complete ſatisfaction? Did I not previouſly repreſent the enjoyment as greater than I found it? Did every moment contribute to the ſatisfaction of my ſpirit? Did pleaſure take poſſeſſion of my ſoul? Did it feel no want of any kind? Did it remain to me conſtantly new, conſtantly charming? Was there no irkſomeneſs and diſſatisfaction mingled with it? Did no little diſappointment diſturb its enjoyment? Did not tediouſneſs deaden my mirth--one

gloomy reflection glide into my heart? Did not the image of purer, higher joys ſtart up before my mind, which made me feel the defect and imperfection of what raviſhed me before? Did I not, languid from the inceſſant ſtir, or reminded by the painful ſenſation of my exhauſted powers, or tired of the narrow compaſs and the uniform appearance of this pleaſure, look forward to the end of it with a grateful or rather with an impatient deſire? And, if all this is not to be denied, if I have frequently experienced the ſame, muſt I not allow, that theſe pleaſures and diverſions promiſe me more than they perform; that their fame is much higher than their intrinſic value; and that probably their credit would not be long ſupported, if every one was governed more in his judgement by what actually paſſes within him, than by the deciſions of others, if every one, on ſuch occaſions, had candour enough to declare to himſelf and

others,

others, how he really found the caſe with him, and what he thought of them, whenever he reflected on them with coolneſs of temper and ſerenity of mind?

A ſecond queſtion which every man who loves himſelf, and eſpecially every Chriſtian who ſtrives after a real and laſting perfection, muſt propoſe and anſwer to himſelf, when he reflects in retirement on this kind of diverſions and pleaſures, is this: Have they been perfectly harmleſs to me?

I ſpeak not here of the prejudicial influence, the too frequent or immoderate enjoyment of them may have on the health, and but too often has, though a matter in itſelf of ſo much importance. For this is a prejudice that a man cannot conceal from himſelf; the direct ſenſation of it, or the example of others that ſmart under it, ſufficiently force our attention, and loudly give

give us caution. But the moral injuries, the imprudent uſe of ſuch pleaſures may produce, which do not ſtrike us ſo ſenſibly, which work more in the dark, if the generality of men would ſee and judge of them as they ought, they muſt firſt be taught to reflect.

It is not enough, therefore, that, in the common import of the words, "A man does no harm;" that he falls into no groſs delinquencies, commits no heinous tranſgreſſions, does nothing repugnant to honeſty and good manners, and which could not eaſily be done in the company of well-educated, and for the moſt part ſenſible perſons. No; the wiſe man and the Chriſtian, who endeavours to preſerve an innocent heart and an unſullied conſcience; to conform in every particular to the maxims of truth, of order, of Chriſtian integrity and love, and to reduce his internal ſtate to the completeſt harmony with his out-

outward behaviour; who reſolves to think nothing, to ſpeak nothing, to do nothing, inconſiſtent with his character, or that may lead him off from God and the deſign of his creation; ſuch an one muſt obſerve many things on theſe occaſions; muſt guard himſelf againſt many things, which eſcape the attention of the giddy, or are by moſt men accounted wholly indifferent.

The man, therefore, to whom the perfection of his ſpirit is no leſs dear than the health of his body, cannot refrain, on ſuch occaſions, from putting to himſelf theſe or ſimilar queſtions: In the enjoyment of theſe pleaſures is my ſpirit in a virtuous and orderly frame? Are no irregular, forbidden propenſities and deſires in agitation within me? or have I, as much as in me lies, ſuppreſſed them effectually, or rejected them with abhorrence? Have I maintained the command over the blandiſhments

diſhments of ſenſe, or given full ſcope to their influence, and yielded to their charms? Has the advantage in perſon, in dreſs, in accompliſhment, in engaging and winning behaviour, which others have, or ſeem to have, over me; has the ſuperiority in eſteem and applauſe, which they have found the means to acquire, or which chance or fortune has let fall upon them, excited no envy, no diſtaſte in my ſoul? Is no tie of ſocial life thereby relaxed? no latent ſeed of animoſity and ill-nature ſown? Have I ſeen all that was beautiful, all that was good, all that was pre-eminent, in others, with a humane and benevolent heart, and looked on their joy and their ſucceſs as my joy and my ſucceſs? Have I ſhewn juſtice, equity, indulgence, to all? ſought to tarniſh no excellence, to leſſen no merit, to detract from no good quality, in my companions, from motives of jealouſy? ridiculed no inoffenſive failing, no innocent inaccuracy? inſultingly or ma-

liciouſly ſneered at any outward defect? been guilty of no ſevere, no uncandid, no temerarious judgement? degraded myſelf by no ambiguous, no biting, no contumelious jeſt? Have I reſiſted every inticement to vanity and pride, diſturbed the ſocial pleaſure by no petulancy or ill-humour, and ſhewn no ſcorn, no contemptuous coolneſs towards any? Have I, in fine, lifted—ſilently lifted up my mind to GOD, honoured him as my Father, in the midſt of this delightful enjoyment, as who grants his children each innoxious joy? Or, did I loſe him and his will, and my relation to him, entirely out of ſight, and put aſide theſe thoughts as inconſiſtent and incompatible with pleaſure? He that cannot ſatisfy himſelf on theſe queſtions, he who has made himſelf guilty of ſuch faults; to him the ſocial pleaſures and diverſions he has enjoyed have not been totally harmleſs; they have made impreſſions upon him more or leſs detrimental;

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he has not enjoyed them in an innocent and good temper of mind, or as a Chriſtian ever watchful over himſelf, conſtantly ſtriving after perfection, never unmindful of his duty, and animated at all times, and in all places, with the ſpirit of truth, of humanity, and the fear of GOD.

If, however, a man has no reproach to make himſelf in any of theſe reſpects, and accordingly can look back with a tranquil heart on theſe paſt enjoyments; yet ſuch an one, who reflects upon them in the ſilence of ſolitude, will naturally fall upon a third queſtion, of no inferior importance. It is this: What would be the conſequence if I were to uſe theſe pleaſures and diverſions too often? Would they always continue as harmleſs to me? Should I always ſo ſucceſsfully combat every temptation to envy, to pride, to vanity? always retain order, the temper of Chriſtian virtue, and univerſal benevolence, ſo unimpaired

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in my ſoul? always preſerve my heart from levity and folly? Would not at length the attendance on divine worſhip, the exerciſes of piety, ſilent meditation on God and Religion, on my preſent and future condition, the affairs of my vocation, the diſcharge of my Chriſtian, my civil, my domeſtic duties, be a burden to me? Would it not coſt me too much time in the embelliſhment of my perſon, in the preparatives to theſe pleaſures, and in refreſhing myſelf after them? Should I ſufficiently enjoy my life, which is already ſo ſhort and tranſient? Should I ſo employ it as becomes a reaſonable man, a Chriſtian, if I gave into ſo many diſſipations, and directed my chief attention to frivolities?

And what diſorders would not hence ariſe! Here are the affairs of my calling, which I cannot neglect without manifeſt prejudice; the due execution whereof demands

mands a diſengaged mind, a continued induſtry, and indefatigable attention: there are domeſtic affairs, which are ſeldom to be poſtponed without damage, or ſolely entruſted to others without waſte, which, without the inſpection and interference of the maſter or miſtreſs, may eaſily get into confuſion. Here are innocent, uneducated children, who want the preſence, the care, and the ſupport of their parents; whoſe mind and heart are to be formed by them; whoſe education ſhould be their principal, their darling employment; and who, in their abſence, are never out of danger from bad example and hurtful impreſſions: there are widows, orphans, poor, ſick, friends, acquaintance, whom we, as Men and Chriſtians, are bound to help, to counſel, and to comfort; whoſe happineſs we may and ſhould promote, not merely by our alms, but by various perſonal ſervices and ſoothing attentions.—But how can I do all theſe duties, how anſwer all theſe demands,

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if I make too frequent a uſe of each ſocial pleaſure and diverſion, if I diſſipate the attention, the means, the time, the faculties, I want for ſo many far more important objects, in ſuch purſuits?

Has a man ſedately reflected on theſe queſtions, and anſwered them duly to himſelf; then ſtill a fourth queſtion will naturally ariſe in his mind, which is this: "Are there not nobler and more durable pleaſures and joys than theſe, on the enjoyment whereof I am giving an account to myſelf? At preſent I need not enjoy them; conſtantly I cannot enjoy them; and the too frequent enjoyment of them may eaſily become hurtful and dangerous to me. And yet I never ceaſe from hankering after pleaſures, and wiſh to be continually gay. May there not then be other ſources of pleaſure and joy, from whence I may at all times draw, and which I can never exhauſt?"

Yes; ſuch ſources, O Man, O Chriſtian, there are! They lie quite cloſe beſide thee, conſtantly ſtand open to thee, and will never deceive thy expectations. Here are various helps for procuring thee agreeable and uſeful knowledge, for making thee more acquainted with the heavens and the earth, with man and beaſt, with thyſelf and all that ſurrounds thee. Thou haſt curioſity: excite and nouriſh it; thou wilt not be able wholly to ſatisfy it; but neither wilt thou ſeek its ſatisfaction without delight.

There are thy children, O Father, O Mother! Thou loveſt them; thou wiſheſt to ſee them happy: let them then, even now, be happy in thy company, in thy converſe, and be thou ſo with them thyſelf! And this thou wilt be, if thou there expand thy heart in love towards them, takeſt a part in their innocent joys, forwardeſt

wardeſt their opening reaſon, planteſt in their tender hearts the ſentiments of piety and loving-kindneſs, and delighteſt thyſelf in the foretaſte of their future felicity, to which thou art thus laying a ſolid foundation.

Here are friends, acquaintance, with whom thou mayeſt join in improving, entertaining, familiar diſcourſe, to whom thou canſt open thy heart, in whoſe intercourſe thou mayſt learn contentment and wiſdom.

There are the poor, the ſick, the wretched, the forlorn, whom thou mayeſt relieve, reſtore, and comfort; whom thou mayeſt aſſiſt and adviſe; whom probably thou mayeſt bring home to GOD; and who will revere thee as an angel ſent from heaven, cover thee with bleſſings; and this will give thee to know and feel, that there is no nobler, more godlike pleaſure, than the pleaſure of doing good.

Here is, in ſhort, Religion, which elevates thy ſpirit to God, its origin; teaches thee to venerate and love thy Creator as thy Father; preſents thee to Jeſus, thy faithfulleſt friend and brother; unravels to thee all the perplexities of this life; mitigates all its afflictions; and gives thee the raviſhing hope of a better after death! Make thyſelf acquainted with this friend, this comforter of man. Let her inſtruct thee; let her warm thy heart with devotion; let her be the guide of thy conduct; ſo will peace abide in thy ſpirit, and confidence and joy will attend thee in all thy ways.

Theſe, O Man, O Chriſtian! theſe are pleaſures and joys, which are the pureſt, the nobleſt, the moſt laſting of all. Taſte them; enjoy them: thou wilt ever do ſo with a quiet conſcience, ever with exalted ſatisfaction. And then wilt thou know

know for certain, that the ſocial pleaſures and diverſions on which we are now diſcourſing, are not the only, not the principal goods of life; that they have not quite that value which is uſually ſet upon them; that the want of them may eaſily be repaired; and that we muſt enjoy them with moderation and caution, if we would not loſe more elevated joys for their ſake.

Thus thinks the ſenſible man of the public amuſements and pleaſures which he has enjoyed, and which are now ſuſpended. Thus does he take reaſon and experience to counſel, for ſtating their real value.

And now what is the reſult of all this?

It reſults: that you, who, on account of your health, on account of your ſtation, or from other cauſes, could not, or did not, chooſe to enjoy them, have not loſt any thing near ſo much by your ab-

ſence as you probably imagined. This is what every intelligent or wiſe man who enjoyed them, and has now quietly reflected upon them, muſt tell you. Therefore reckon not yourſelves unhappy, that you were reduced to forego them. It is true, you enjoy a kind of pleaſure leſs than others, but you are thereby in ſafety againſt ſo many temptations to evil, from ſo many cauſes of perturbation and impatience, from ſo many dangers of hurting your health or your conſcience; you have ſaved thereby ſo much time and leiſure, ſo much more freedom of ſpirit to all the nobler kinds of pleaſure, the ſources of which ſtand open to all men.

It farther reſults: that not all, probably the leaſt number of you, could enjoy theſe pleaſures and diverſions without danger and damage; as not all, as probably but the leaſt part of you, are ſo wiſe, ſo reſolute in virtue and piety, as to maintain the govern-

government over themſelves, even in the noiſe and tumult of the livelieſt ſenſual pleaſures, or be able to ſtifle in their birth every evil, unjuſt, unchaſte, or envious thought, and to deny each irregular paſſion an entrance to their hearts. And he that cannot do this, whoſe heart admits every impreſſion, whether bad or good, complies with every thing; who ſo eaſily forgets both himſelf and his duty, ſo eaſily loſes God and Religion out of ſight; he is, on ſuch occaſions, ſurrounded by danger on all ſides, muſt always come off a loſer, always return home leſs wiſe and good; and he ought never to expoſe himſelf to theſe dangers, till he has provided himſelf with better armour againſt them. Here it may be ſaid: "Can a man take fire in his boſom, and his cloaths not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?"

It reſults, thirdly, from the reflections we have made on theſe pleaſures and di-

verſions, that you, who have enjoyed them, and, as I hope, enjoyed them with innocence, may be glad that you are now enabled to collect your thoughts more eaſily and oftener than before, and may meditate in ſilence, without any diſtraction, on the weightieſt concerns of men and Chriſtians. It reſults that you will manifeſtly act againſt your duty, and inimically to yourſelves, if, inſtead of employing this time, when no public diverſions are allowed, when every thing invites you to ſerioufneſs and reflection, to ſuch purpoſes, you ſeek to repair that deficiency by other convivial pleaſures, which, though leſs noiſy and tumultuous, are to the full as diſtracting.

Let this not be the caſe with you; but rather turn this favourable circumſtance to your profit, in advancing the life, the joy, the perfection of your immortal pirit. And your ſpirit ſtands in need of food,

food, refreſhment, ſtrength, and recreation. Your ſpirit too muſt have its feſtivities, its days of good chear. Grant it them now, when you have ſo many incitements thereto. Allow it to reflect more freely, more conſecutively, more compoſedly, on the ends of its creation; allow it the happineſs of raiſing itſelf to GOD, its Author and Father, and more fully to feel and to enjoy its immortality.

And what benefits, what bleſſings, are we not reminded of by the advent of Jeſus into the world, and the commemoration of his love in the holy communion! Let then your rational, your immortal ſpirit, contemplate theſe benefits, enjoy theſe bleſſings, and delight herſelf in GOD; that, with affected and grateful hearts, with Chriſtian gladneſs, with invigorated hope, you may celebrate the memorial of Jeſus on the feſtival of his birth, and at the table of his love, and there render the

praiſe

praiſe and the glory to God which ſuch benefits demand at our hands.

It reſults, in fine, from the reflections we have been making on the public diverſions that have been enjoyed, and are now ſuſpended, that that is true which I lately told you: "To the pure, all things are pure; to the good and pious, every thing is harmleſs." Yes, how extraordinary ſoever it may ſound, it is nevertheleſs true; the wiſer, the more virtuous, the more pious, a man is, the more he is animated by the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, the nearer he is to Chriſtian perfection; ſo much the more ſafely, ſo much the more peaceably, may he enjoy all ſocial pleaſures and diverſions, that are in and for themſelves allowable; ſo much the leſs hurt or danger has he to fear from them; ſo much the purer is the ſatisfaction he therein enjoys. The farther, on the other hand, a man is from ſuch a wiſe and virtuous

frame; the more authority ſenſuality has over him; the more unreſtrained, unruly paſſions domineer in his heart; the more apt he is to loſe GOD and his duty out of ſight: ſo much the more dangerous and hurtful may ſuch pleaſures and diverſions prove to him; ſo much the more ought he to guard himſelf againſt them, and in them to watch over himſelf.

So ill-founded is that ſaying we ſo often hear: "Yes, pious people, or people who ſtrive after a higher degree of piety, ought not indeed to do thus; they ought certainly to abſtain from ſuch pleaſures and diverſions; if they partook of them, they would doubtleſs act inconſiſtently with their character. But we—we who do not boaſt of ſuch a piety, we who avow our weakneſs, we who make no pretenſions to the gravity of the wiſe, to the ſanctity of the Chriſtian in its higheſt import, we may at leaſt enjoy life, and allow ourſelves in many

many things, which perhaps may not be altogether ſo good." No; every innocent joy, though ſtrong and lively, is conſiſtent with the real, the eminently pious Chriſtian, at its proper time, and within due bounds; the uſe, the participation of it is to him entirely free: and if he do not uſe it, if he voluntarily take no ſhare in it, he acts ſo, either becauſe he does not clearly underſtand the true nature of Chriſtianity and piety of heart; is not conſcious of his freedom, and never takes theſe matters into conſideration; or becauſe he has no taſte for this ſort of joy, and knows and loves other kinds of it, to which he gives the preference.

No; to you alone, who are ſtill always halting between virtue and vice, are of one opinion to-day, and to-morrow of another; who at preſent hold Religion and Chriſtianity for important things, and to-morrow will think no more of them; now

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are making ſome attempts for gaining the conqueſt over yourſelves, and then give the rein to your luſts; to you alone, who yet think they belong peculiarly to you, are joys and diverſions dangerous; to you they may eaſily become pernicious; you ſhould therefore uſe them with the greateſt circumſpection, be moderate in their enjoyment, exerciſe yourſelf frequently in a voluntary abſtinence from them; and think not that, after a long courſe of theſe pleaſures, you will then firſt begin to be real, intrinſically pious Chriſtians; but rather reſolve to acquire a true Chriſtian temper, and eſtabliſh yourſelf in virtue and piety, that afterwards you may the more ſafely enjoy theſe pleaſures, and retain, during the enjoyment of them, an innocent heart, penetrated with the love of GOD and man, and animated with truly Chriſtian mirth. May this be the determination, the endeavour of you all!

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THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE YEAR.

I muſt work the Works of Him that ſent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

JOHN ix. 4.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE YEAR.

TO creatures whoſe life is but of ſhort duration; who can truly enjoy ſcarce the half of their life, or uſe it the beſt way for advancing their real perfections and happineſs; and who withal are never ſure of the continuance of this life; to ſuch creatures a year muſt abſolutely be a conſiderable portion of time; the loſs or the gain of a year muſt be a great loſs or gain to them! Are theſe creatures, however, immortal; does their preſent life touch on the future; is the one only a conſequence and continuation of the other; will their future life be happy or unhappy according

to the degree in which they have well or ill employed the preſent; then a year muſt be ſtill more important to them, the loſs or the gain of a year muſt be ſtill much greater to them.

But are not we theſe creatures? Is not this the caſe with our life? It laſts ſeventy, and, if it runs high, it laſts eighty years. Very few reach this age. But even they who attain to it can ſcarcely be ſaid to rejoice in their lives for above twenty or thirty years, or enjoy it with conſciouſneſs and the manifeſtation of their nobleſt ſpiritual faculties. The reſt of it we paſs as irrational children, or in ſleep, in infirmities and pain, in low and animal gratifications, in doing of nothing, in perturbation or in languor. All this while we know, that after death we have another life to expect, and that our preſent conduct will fix and determine our future lot. How important then muſt a year be to us! how

much muſt depend on the good or bad application of it! and how zealous ought this conſideration to make us in the diſcharge of our duties!

Our Saviour, who always goes before us with his example, may even herein be a pattern to us. He ſaw with conviction the importance of time, and each greater or leſs diviſion of it; thence he was ſo buſy and indefatigable in doing that which was committed to him to do on earth; "therefore," ſays he, "I muſt work the works of him that ſent me while it is day;" while I have time, and means, and opportunity for it; "the night cometh," times of adverſity come, unfavourable circumſtances, ſickneſs and death, "when no man can work," when no man can tranſact his affairs. How wiſe, how noble, are theſe ſentiments of our Lord! Oh, let them be our ſentiments alſo! My preſent diſcourſe is intended, under the Divine Bleſſing, to

awaken or to ſtrengthen them in you. I ſhall therefore, to this end, lay before you

The Importance of a Year;

and I wiſh from my heart, that theſe conſiderations may incite us all to make the beſt and worthieſt uſe of the year we have entered upon to-day!

When we ſpeak of the importance and the great value of a year, we muſt preſuppoſe, that it was not Chance, but a wiſe Creator, that placed us on this globe of the earth; that it is not a matter of indifference, how we behave ourſelves upon it, how we employ our capacities, our abilities, our time, and our goods; that God has delivered to each of us, as well as to his ſon Jesus Christ, a certain work to finiſh; or that we are ordained to certain ends, and that theſe ends are important. We pre-ſuppoſe, that we are not here merely

merely for ſupporting our terrene life, and ſupplying our animal wants; that we ſhould eat, and drink, and ſleep, and propagate our ſpecies, and procure ourſelves a number of ſenſual pleaſures, and, by the proſecution of the affairs of our calling, obtain the means thereto; but that we are principally deſigned to promote the perfection of our ſpirit, by reflection and practice to become wiſe and virtuous, and by wiſdom and virtue to be uſeful to others, to learn to elevate ourſelves to the knowledge of God, to love and to obey him, and by degrees to render ourſelves qualified and fitted for a higher and more perfect ſtate in another life.

If we hold this to be our deſtination; if we ſo conſider our preſent life as Reaſon and Religion perſuade us to conſider it, and are deſirous of learning to underſtand the importance of a year; then we muſt enquire:

How much good or harm we may do in one year, and how much may thereby promote or impede our perfection and happineſs;

How many important and infinitely extending conſequences the good and the harm we do in one year, as well in regard to ourſelves as in regard to others, draw after them;

How different the future years may be, in many reſpects, from the preſent;

And how uncertain it is, whether this may not be the laſt year of our lives.

Let us conſider theſe four articles ſomewhat circumſtantially. They will furniſh us with ſo many main arguments for labouring in the work for which GOD has placed us on this terreſtrial globe, while it it is day, that the night may not overtake us before it be finiſhed.

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We can, in the firſt place, do much good or harm, and thereby very much promote or impede our perfection and happineſs; and this is the firſt cauſe why we attribute ſo much importance to a year, or eſteem it ſuch a conſiderable part of our lives. How ſurprizingly great, how far above the reach of numbers, is the ſum total of thoughts and ideas that ariſe in one ſingle ſoul in the courſe of a year! Divide the year into days, the days into hours, the hours into minutes and ſeconds; and, when you have reckoned up the reſults together, ſtill it will not yearly amount to the ſum of your thoughts! We all think inceſſantly, whether we wake or ſleep, labour or reſt; our thoughts ſucceed each other with a velocity that is ſcarcely to be conceived, and but ſeldom are they totally indifferent. How much good or harm muſt a man think in one year! and how much often depends on one ſingle thought! How much then muſt depend on the thou-

ſands, the hundred thouſands, the millions of thoughts that riſe up in us in a whole year!

How far muſt it bring a man on in wiſdom and virtue, how much contribute to his improvement and perfection, if he attend to all the thoughts of which he is conſcious from one end of the year to the other; if he try them by the rules of truth and juſtice, frequently and ingenuouſly direct them to the worthieſt and beſt objects, to GOD, to his perfections and benefits, to JESUS CHRIST and his example, to the welfare of his fellow-creatures and the means of promoting it, to his own deportment, to his preſent and future vocation; and endeavour to give them the degree of perſpicuity, of certainty and life, which he may by frequent and continued reflection! What a rich proviſion of uſeful ideas and knowledges may he thus lay up for the future! What a fruitful ſeed may he thus

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ſow in his ſoul of innumerable other good thoughts, ſentiments, determinations, and actions!

How much, on the other hand, muſt a man loſe, how much muſt he impede his perfection and happineſs, if he allow his thoughts to ramble about, as it were, in his ſoul, for a whole year long, without inſpection and order; if he imbibe every impreſſion from without, or accept every image his imagination preſents, or that ſpring up accidentally in him, without conſideration, without examination, without choice, and allow himſelf to be governed by them! if he turn off his thoughts by deſign, from ſerious and important concerns, ſuch as relate to God, and Religion, and Eternity! if he frequently direct them on purpoſe to bad, or even almoſt always to worthleſs, indifferent, terreſtrial things! and at the ſame time perſuade himſelf, that it is an unneceſſary conſtraint,

conſtraint, or an exceſſive conſcientiouſneſs, to make ſuch a work about mere thoughts, or to judge ſo ſeverely of their good and bad texture! How very much muſt the light of his underſtanding be darkened, and the ſtrength of his ſpirit be weakened! how much nouriſhment muſt every ſordid appetite within him acquire! how unfit muſt he become for withſtanding temptations and allurements to ſin! how often muſt irregular, violent deſires ariſe from his corrupted thoughts, and unlawful actions again from theſe! and how much ſeed is he ſowing in his ſoul, for unjuſt judgments, criminal luſts, and actions to ſpring from in future, which will thrive in concealment, and bring forth the fruits of perdition!

Go now from thoughts to the words we utter in the courſe of a year. How great too is their amount! How much good or evil may we ſpeak in one year, and how may

may we advantage or hurt ourſelves and others thereby! How ſalutary, how precious, frequently, is but one good word that is ſpoken in ſeaſon! What diſorder, what evil, on the contrary, may a bad word produce, which we are prompted to utter by envy, or hatred, or malice, or imprudence, or weakneſs! To what a vaſt ſum then muſt the total of all the ſpeeches amount which proceed from our mouth in a year! Repreſent to yourſelves a man who keeps his tongue, as it were, with a bridle through all that period, and ſpeaks conſtantly with conſideration and to good purpoſe; who ſeizes all proper occaſions, one while to inform the ignorant or erroneous, whether in ſpiritual or in ſecular affairs, at another, to give affectionate ſuggeſtions and cautions to one addicted to bad habits and failings; now to ſpeak conſolation to ſome mourner, then encouragement to the dejected; now to take up the cauſe of the innocent, the cauſe of the needy, the widow

widow and the orphan, then to defend the cauſe of Religion and Virtue; now to impart his ſound ſkill in the buſineſſes and concerns of this life, then his clear knowledge of the doctrines and duties of Chriſtianity, freely to others; now to exhilarate the company by inoffenſive, harmleſs raillery, and then to turn their attention to more ſerious and important topics; figure to yourſelves ſuch a man, I ſay, and then judge how much good he may perform by ſpeaking in the courſe of one year! how much harm he may prevent! from how many crimes and errors may he preſerve his brethren! how many hardſhips alleviate to them! how many rational, wiſe, virtuous, pious, and generally uſeful thoughts, ſentiments, reſolutions, and actions, thereby encourage or excite in others, and theſe again in other men!

Repreſent to yourſelves, on the other hand, a man, who, during the ſame ſpace of

of time, gives a free ſcope to his tongue, and pays little regard to any thing he ſays, unleſs it relate immediately to himſelf; who accounts it ſomething of a ſhame to be heard talking of important, ſerious, and doubtleſs, of religious affairs; who thinks that the whole buſineſs of his ſocial converſations is to paſs away the time, or to ſhew his wit, and gives himſelf no concern at all about profiting others by a right application of the gift of ſpeech, or perhaps even dares to ſport with the moſt ſacred and awful things, to make a mock at ſin and vice, to eſpouſe their cauſe and recommend them to his audience, or to amuſe and ſcandalize the company by calumnies, by ſlanders, by ſevere and ſarcaſtical judgments of other men, by lyes, by indecent ambiguities, by foul diſcourſe; how much harm may not ſuch an one perpetrate in one ſingle year by his ſpeech! how much ſuſpicion, diſunion, diſcord, coolneſs, animoſity, may he not excite!

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how many bad impreſſions will he not probably make on the innocent but young and unguarded heart! how many good impreſſions may he weaken,—obliterate! how many thereby will probably be encouraged in vice, how many will be frightened from virtue, or be rendered leſs ſteady in their attachment to it!

Conſider, laſtly, how many good or bad actions we may perform in one year. Their number is likewiſe very great, though it ſhould not quite equal the number of our thoughts and words. Does there ever elapſe one day in the year whereon we do nothing either good or bad? Nay, do any hours of the day paſs by, wherein what we do is abſolutely indifferent, and may not turn out either good or bad? Are we not daily either diligent or negligent, conſcientious or unconſcientious, in the tranſactions of our buſineſs? Do we not daily enjoy the bounties of God either with chearful

chearful gratitude, or with ſtupid inſenſibility and indifference, either in rational moderation, or in an extravagant and intemperate riot? May we not daily exerciſe ourſelves in meekneſs, in humility, in forbearance and kindneſs; or ſuffer ourſelves o be thrown into rage, or ſeduced into pride, into a froward and haughty behaviour, or to be otherwiſe offenſive to our neighbour? May we not daily give proofs of our contentedneſs in our ſtation, of ſubmiſſion to the Will of God, of truſt in his Providence, of confidence in his help, or teſtimonies of the reverſe? Is any day likely to paſs but we are tempted in one way or other to ill, or allured and incited to good, and ſo our propenſity weakened to the one, or our love to the other more confirmed? Is it likely that a day ſhould paſs when we ſhould have no opportunity of being ſerviceable either to our family, to our friends, or to other men, by our advice, by our alms, by our credit, by our example, by other good offices we may do them? To what a

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ſum then muſt our good and bad actions in one year amount, according as we conduct ourſelves one way or the other! And thereby how much muſt we likewiſe advance or retard our perfection and happineſs! If no action we perform be without all effect, how innumerable then muſt the uſeful or injurious conſequences be that proceed from the actions of a whole year! And if you add to theſe actions the thoughts and the words of this ſingle year, how great in general muſt the ſum of the good or the evil be which will be placed to your account in ſuch portion of time, and which is ſo cloſely connected with the ſum of the happineſs or miſery you have in future to expect! How important then muſt one year be in this point of view! how much does it allow to be done of the work that GOD has given us here to do!

Think not to ſay, "It is true, I can in one year do much good or harm; and if I had

had only one year to live, then exceedingly much would depend on the uſe and application of this year; but as I have yet in all likelihood many, or at leaſt ſeveral years before me, what I neglect in one, I may eaſily make up for in another; the harm that I do I may hereafter repair. Nothing leſs than this. Cuſtomary as this concluſion is, and readily as mankind adopt it, it is not the leſs falſe and deceitful; and as little can the peace it procures us ſtand out the teſt of the ſlighteſt reflection. No; the good that we have neglected in one year can, neither in regard to ourſelves or other men, never, abſolutely never, be made up; and the evil we have committed in it can but very rarely be made good or repaired. And this is the ſecond point, which, on conſideration, may convince us of the great importance of a year.

That we never can, properly ſpeaking, compenſate the good we have neglected,

muſt be apparent to every reflecting perſon. We are creatures who cannot arrive at perfection at once; it can no otherwiſe be attained than by exerciſe, by the beſt application of our capacities and powers; and who never become ſo perfect, but they may and ſhould become more perfect ſtill. We muſt therefore always proceed gradually in knowledge, in virtue, in perfection and happineſs. In this year, for example, we may advance five, in another ten, in a third twenty degrees on the ſcale that leads to perfection and happineſs. Now, if we ſtand ſtill in the firſt or ſecond year, or even go backward, can we ever make good what we have thus neglected? If we are very ſucceſsful, we get in the ſucceeding year to the point we ſhould have reached in this; but it is impoſſible for us to reach that degree of perfection which we ſhould have reached if we had laboured with due earneſtneſs at our improvement and perfection, this as well as

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the ſucceeding year. When we might have advanced ten ſteps farther in knowledge, in virtue, in piety, in capacity for enjoying the bliſs of Heaven, we have either not advanced at all, or only gone five ſteps forward; and conſequently we remain for ever and ever ſo much farther behind him who in the ſame time has done what we neglected to do, and now, like us, purſues with vigour the path of duty and virtue.

Irreparable, however, as this loſs is, it is yet the ſmalleſt we can ſuffer in this reſpect. If we neglect one year, let one year elapſe without ſeriouſly labouring at our improvement, we have not only irrevocably loſt this time; we muſt not only do in the following year what we ought to have done in this, but we have in the mean time been weakening our powers, our capacities for doing it; have in the mean time multiplied the difficulties at-

tendant on it; have in the mean time afforded time and opportunity for our errors, our prejudices, our irregular inclinations and appetites, to ſtrengthen themſelves in us, and to ſet narrower limits to our freedom; we have in the mean time thought much evil, ſpoke and done much evil, the pernicious effects of which will in future appear in us, and hinder us very often in the good we then actually wiſh to do. We, therefore, have not only not made all the way that we might have made, but we have in the mean time been caſting a thouſand ſtumbling-blocks and obſtacles in it, which will very often force us to ſtop, and very often make us ſtumble and fall, and will never allow us in the following year to make ſuch advances on it as we might have done in this. So much do we deceive ourſelves, when we yield to the flattering idea, that we may make up in future for what we now neglect.

It

It is no leſs difficult, in moſt caſes, to repair the harm we have done in one year by exertions in the next, or to remove the pernicious effects of it. Suppoſe that the bad, the unchaſte, the malicious, the blaſphemous thoughts which I have raiſed and nouriſhed in this year, ſhould be the means of filling me with the extremeſt abhorrence in the next, will they therefore be effaced and eradicated from my ſoul? will they not often return to me whether I will or no? will they not probably often diſturb me in the midſt of my devotions, in the midſt of my moſt ſerious and important concerns? Probably they may perſecute me as long as I live; probably I ſhall reſiſt them a thouſand times; probably I ſhall be obliged to take them with me into the grave! Suppoſe that the bad, the injurious, or the deceitful words, which I have ſpoken this year, occaſion me a ſincere remorſe, which cauſes me to abſtain from them in the next; may they not in the

mean time have made indelible impreſſions on others? may they not in the mean time have robbed the innocent of their good name, or have made him, who was wavering between virtue and vice, declare himſelf for the latter? and may not theſe corrupt effects of my imprudent or malignant ſpeeches be of ſuch a nature, that all I can henceforward ſay and do againſt them will be in vain? Suppoſe, in ſhort, that the unjuſt, the unreaſonable, the ſelfiſh actions that I have committed in this year occaſion me the moſt bitter anguiſh and floods of tears in the next; can I thereby repair the miſchief I have done my neighbour, the injuſtice I have ſhewn him, the trouble and vexation I have cauſed him? How ſeldom can I make good the loſs he has undergone! how ſeldom can I offer him a compenſation adequate to my injuries! how much ſeldomer can I reſtore him to his loſt health, or his peace of mind! or can I, by behaving to him now

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in conformity to my duty, hold him therefore unhurt by my not having done ſo before? No; juſt as little as the good that we neglect in one year can be made good, ſo little, in moſt caſes, can the harm we have done in it even only in part be repaired. How important then muſt a year be, when we look to the conſequences of what we do or permit in it! and on the laſting, very often unterminable, duration of theſe conſequences!

Attend to this, particularly, you who are ſtill in your youth, and ſtand, as it were, on the entrance to your earthly career. One year of youth is commonly of more conſequence than ten years of manly or of more advanced age. In one year of youth you may and ſhould perform things, which either you cannot at all, or not without extreme difficulty, effect in all the future years of your life. The good you neglect in youth can never be

compenſated, and the evil you then commit can never be wholly made good. And yet the young man commonly imagines that he may ſafely be more laviſh of his time than the aged; that one year is no great matter with him who has ſtill ſo many before him. But he much miſtakes. To the old man certainly his latter days are important. But the moſt of what he had to do is already done. He is now that which here on earth he might and could become. The young man has it yet to be; and on the uſe of his youthful years eſpecially depends what he will be throughout his future life, and even in eternity, when this life is over. How important, how deciſive then muſt a year be to him?

Would you learn to underſtand the importance and the value of one year, then conſider, in the third place, how different the future years may be in many reſpects from the preſent; and how uncertain it is, whether

whether we ſhall then or can perform and do what we now are able to do and to perform.

At preſent we are healthy and alert; at preſent we have the powers of mind and body, which inſpire us with chearfulneſs and alacrity, which fit us for continued affairs, for exerciſe in the harder virtues, for gaining the command of ourſelves, for fighting againſt ſin. Probably in the next year we may loſe this health, this alacrity, theſe powers; perhaps ſickneſſes and pains may caſt us down! and then we are diſmayed at every difficulty we meet with on the way of wiſdom and virtue; then we ſtart back as ſoon as an enemy appears; then we avoid every thing that bears the name of toil and trouble, of conflict and ſelf-denial.

At preſent we enjoy a quiet condition; at preſent we have time and leiſure for re-

flexion, for reading, for frequent devotion; at preſent we have the means and opportunities for exerting benificence. Perhaps in the next year we may meet with misfortune and want; perhaps then our ſecular buſineſſes and cares may be multiplied; perhaps we may then be deprived of the means of doing good to others!

At preſent, we have children, friends, and acquaintance about us, to whom we are ſerviceable by our inſtruction, our advice, or our example, whoſe temporal and eternal welfare we are enabled to advance. Perhaps in the enſuing year they may be raviſhed from us, or may be removed to a diſtance; and then we never may do again what now we can do for their good!

At preſent we have various means, many impelling motives and encouragements to good; at preſent we have parents, friends, teachers,

teachers, to inſtruct, to admoniſh, to exhort, to aſſiſt us, who go before us with their example, who co-operate with us in our improvement, and facilitate to us the performance of our duty. Perhaps, in the enſuing year we may loſe, altogether, or in part, theſe helps, theſe incitements to virtue; perhaps in their ſtead we may meet with a thouſand impediments, obſtacles, temptations, and ſnares on the path of life; and if we are not able now to cope with them with courage and vigour, it is hardly poſſible that we then ſhall ſtand out the combat, and come off victorious.

At preſent, in all theſe reſpects, we are enlightened by the day, which renders our work eaſy and pleaſant; perhaps in the ſucceeding year the night may come on, the night of afflictions, of misfortunes, of the diſeaſes and infirmities of age, when no man can labour and toil with ſucceſs. How important then on this argument like-

likewiſe muſt one year be to us! and how much cauſe have we to preſs on with the moſt ardent zeal in the proſecution of the work that is given us to do, ſince we know not whether, in the following year, we may be able to purſue it ſo well, or even at all!

Conſider, laſtly, that each year may be the laſt to us, and learn from this circumſtance alſo how to eſtimate the value and importance of one year. And can we have the leaſt doubt of how much depends on the right uſe of it, and how much it produces, if we repeatedly think with ourſelves: Perhaps this may be the laſt year that I ſhall attend in ſociety with my brethren the worſhip of God, and be able to do the will of my Creator and Redeemer on earth; the laſt I ſhall have for extending my reſearches, diſcarding my errors, and enlarging and rectifying my knowledge: and then I go to the ſtate of departed

parted ſouls, where this knowledge, whatever its nature, will compoſe the matter of my reflections, my entertainment with myſelf and my pleaſure. Perhaps this is the laſt year I ſhall have for labouring at my improvement, for exerciſing myſelf in Virtue, and for demonſtrating the integrity of my Faith by good works: and then ſucceeds the retribution; and this retribution will be exactly proportioned to the degree of my integrity and virtue. Perhaps this is the laſt year in which I can be uſeful to my brethren, and endeavour at their advantage: and then I muſt leave them; and then perhaps I ſhall lament that I was not of greater advantage to my brethren, that I did not perform more good, and did not lay up larger treaſures for futurity. Perhaps this is the laſt year in which God will call me to repentance; that he will grant me his grace and the forgiveneſs of my ſins; that he will warn me of corruption and ruin: and then this

call

call will reach me no more; then theſe benefits will be no longer allowed me, then perhaps the moſt horrible perdition will be my portion; then will the night come upon me, when no man can work. Ah, no; to day, while I hear the voice of God, I will hearken to it; I will do to-day, what perhaps I may not be able to do to-morrow! This year may be my laſt; the good or bad employment of it may be deciſive to me!

Of ſo great importance—of ſo great importance is one year to men, who in one year do ſo much good or evil; who can neither make amends for the good they neglect, nor fully repair the evil they have done; who are ſubject to ſo many changes and revolutions in their preſent condition; and whoſe life is ſo ſhort and uncertain! And who does not exclaim with our Saviour: "I muſt work the works of him that ſent me," who has placed me on this earthly ball; I muſt labour at my improvement

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and perfection, muſt do as much good as at all times I can, muſt be as uſeful to other men as I can at all times be, "while it is day," ſo long as I have time, means, powers, and opportunity for it, for "the night cometh, when no man can work!"

Yes, let this be the reſolution of you all! In ſuch diſpoſitions may you commence and complete this year! May it be truly important to you! and may the ſentiment of its importance incite you to the beſt and worthieſt employment of it! To us all may it prove abundantly fruitful in wiſe and pious thoughts, in inſtructive and improving words, in good and generous deeds! Far advance us all in knowledge, in virtue, in Chriſtian integrity, and bring us conſtantly nearer to the mark of our high vocation! May every one of us be doing that which he has to do on earth while it is day to him, and proſecute it with unremitted

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and chearful ardour, that the night of death may fall on none—oh, gracious Lord! on none, ere he have fitted himself for an entrance into eternal life!

ON

ON

PUBLIC DIVERSIONS.

And it was ſo, when the days of their feaſting were gone about, that Job ſent and ſanctified them, and roſe up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job ſaid, It may be that my ſons have ſinned, and curſed GOD in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. Job i. 5.

ON

PUBLIC DIVERSIONS.

I RETURN once more to a ſubject I lately handled. I mean the ſocial pleaſures and diverſions which, for the preſent, are diſcontinued, at leaſt in part, during this ſeaſon to which our Church has thought fit to give the name of Lent. I find it the more neceſſary to addreſs you again upon it, as what I laſt delivered has not been rightly comprehended by all, probably may have been perverted by ſome.

To this I adhere, that I am no enemy to joy and ſocial pleaſure, any more than Religion and Chriſtianity are ſo: that I

readily allow and heartily wiſh you all kinds of real joy: that I do not abſolutely reject even public, ſocial diverſions: that to the pure all things are pure, to the pious all is good; and that no one has more right to ſuch and all other innocent pleaſures, and may enjoy them more ſafely, than the beſt, the devouteſt Chriſtian.

But order, moderation, reſtriction, prudence, muſt be obſerved in all theſe matters, for rendering and keeping them good. And theſe boundaries are but too eaſily tranſgreſſed. If a man hear and believe that a matter is allowable and innocent in and of itſelf, and under certain terms, he but too readily concludes, that he therefore may uſe and enjoy it as often as he has opportunity for it, provided always, that he is not guilty of follies and exceſſes therein.

This concluſion, however, is by no means juſt. Becauſe a matter, in and of itſelf con-

conſidered, is innocent and good, it does not thence follow, that therefore it is the beſt in compariſon of others. It does not follow, that, becauſe I may uſe it at times without hurt, that therefore it will be harmleſs to me, if I uſe it too often. I may doubtleſs, at times, enjoy certain meats, certain kinds of drink, which, if I make them my ordinary meat and my uſual drink, will infallibly ruin my health. Becauſe this man or the other, who is of a ſolid character and a confirmed virtue, may frequent certain diverſions, without injuring his character or his virtue in the ſmalleſt degree, it does not thence follow, that I, who probably have a more pliant character, and am not ſo far advanced in the love of goodneſs, may do the ſame with ſafety. Thus numbers can bear the hardeſt and the groſſeſt food, and expoſe themſelves without danger to the moſt unwholeſome weather; while I can do neither the one nor the other without being ſick.

In ſhort, becauſe I commit no follies and exceſſes, it does not follow, that I am performing my duty, and doing the beſt I can and ought at that particular time.

Nay, if we were not deſigned for more important things; not capable of a higher perfection, of a purer happineſs; not enjoined many other indiſpenſable duties; if our time were leſs ſhort and fleeting than it is; or, if we could undertake and execute quite different things in one and the ſame period of time: then might we always give into the uſe and enjoyment of what, in and of itſelf, is permitted and innoxious, as much as is now uſually done. But even then we ſhould very often have to chuſe, not only between good and bad, but between good and better, between the better and the beſt; to ſet duties againſt duties, pleaſures againſt pleaſures, a greater loſs againſt a ſmaller, perſonal and domeſtic circumſtances and wants againſt general

cuſtoms

cuſtoms and habits of life; and this certainly would not allow us to partake in all ſocial pleaſures, it would lay us under various limitations, and preſcribe great moderation in them. To convince you of this, and to incite you to this moderation, I ſhall make a few remarks.

Partly on loſs of time;

Partly on the pernicious influence, the immoderate enjoyment of ſocial pleaſures has on our temper and turn of mind; and,

Then encounter the pretext that is taken up of its cauſing greater happineſs.

The loſs of time, the too frequent enjoyment of ſocial pleaſure occaſions, is manifeſt, is undeniable. But, manifeſt and undeniable as it is, ſeldom is it thought of, little is it regarded. Of nothing is

man ſo unthrifty as of time; and yet nothing is more fleeting, nothing leſs in his power, nothing weightier in its effects, than time.

We have before ſhewn you how much good or harm may be done in the courſe of one year. What holds good of one year holds proportionably of one day, frequently of a few hours of the day; for hours make days, as days make years. But ſo long as the queſtion relates only to hours, to days, a man thinks he is loſing but little or nothing. He thinks to preſerve the ſum total, becauſe he does not throw it away at once, but only in ſmaller parcels.

Thus we but too often think merely of the few particular hours we paſs in each particular diverſion, in each particular company. In point of numbers, they are not indeed very conſiderable, rarely run higher than to three or four; and what

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are three or four hours to whole weeks or years? But does it then require ſo much ſkill in arithmetic to find out, that four hours, twenty times taken, amount to eighty hours, and theſe in one month to ſix or ſeven entire days, and in one year from ſeventy to eighty whole days? And is this no conſiderable portion of time—and if they are loſt, no conſiderable loſs? And what is become too of all the hours that are ſpent in the needful preparatives to the enjoyment of ſocial pleaſures? Where are the hours, the days, when, ſated and weary with enjoyment, we are not diſpoſed to any ſerious affairs, ſuch as require exertion and diligence? How the amount of loſt time begins now to increaſe!

And, then, in all theſe hours, in all theſe days, is nothing good, nothing important, nothing neceſſary, neglected? Do the affairs of our vocation, our houſhold concerns, ſuffer nothing by all this?

Does

Does the children's education go on juſt as well? the tender, the docile hearts of the little ones, that ſtand ready for every impreſſion, are they juſt as ſafe from degeneracy, as ſucceſsfully formed to wiſdom and virtue? are the exerciſes of devotion as carefully performed, as if theſe hours and days had not been loſt?

And how can the induſtry, the unremitted application, with which we ſhould labour at our own moral improvement, and our advancement in wiſdom and virtue, conſiſt with this prodigality of time? — I cannot conceive — I muſt be plain enough to ſay it, how much ſoever it may diſpleaſe — I cannot conceive, how men, who go every day into company, who paſs all the hours that remain to them from the buſineſs of the day in company, how they ever can become wiſer, and better, and more pious!

I am

I am not ignorant, that intercourſe with mankind, in and of itſelf conſidered, is an excellent means to wiſdom and virtue; that at times it is more improving than lonely ſilent reflection. But, for being this, it muſt be quite otherwiſe managed than it commonly is. They are almoſt always perſons much of our own ſtamp in knowledge and way of thinking with whom we conſort; hold the ſame language; follow the ſame paſtimes with us. And are ordinary converſations indeed ſo framed, that we may learn much from them, that we may be made much better by them? How often, in a whole year, in many companies, may God and Jeſus Chriſt be mentioned with reverence and ſentiment! how often may profitable, moral, or religious ſubjects be brought upon the tapis, or ſupported with participation and pleaſure! how often is it made matter of ſocial inquiry, in what manner a man ſhould act in this or the other uncommon event!

how

how beſt correct ſuch failings, or carry on and promote ſuch a general benefit, or what method ſhould be purſued in the education of children! And if, by chance, ſuch ſubjects are brought forward, how often is it then the heart that ſpeaks! and how often, on the contrary, is it only the tongue! Nay, can we deny it, that ordinary converſation, not ſeldom, tends more to promote folly and vice, than to ſerve the intereſts of wiſdom and virtue. I will judge no man; I readily make allowances for all men, will readily and cheerfully confeſs, that there are good and pious men amongſt us; but this I muſt ſay, that the prevailing ſtyle in companies gives no evidence of it, and, judging by that, we ſhould conclude the reverſe.

I know that ſerious, religious diſcourſe, is not held to be recreation, but effort and labour; and I ſhall not deny, that it is often right, often neceſſary, to make indifferent

ferent matters the ſubjects of diſcourſe.—This is, for inſtance, a caſe wherein I frequently find myſelf. When I come into company, I have probably paſt the greateſt part of the day in reflecting on important concerns; I probably perceive that my ſpirits are exhauſted; it is probably my duty not to ſet them in violent motion. But is this, or is it frequently, the caſe with the majority? Many are employed all day in mechanical, in manual, in œconomical occupations. This is applicable to almoſt every perſon of the other ſex. Others are engaged in mercantile affairs. Theſe are indeed, at times, and to particular perſons, as fatiguing, as exhauſting, as any labours of the mind can be; and ſuch as purſue them ſtand in abſolute need of recreation and refreſhment. But this requires only ſmaller portions, or only certain times and days. The generality employed themſelves in works which demand attention, it is true, but no intenſe exertion.

exertion. The evening comes therefore on them before their ſpirits are lowered. And if they then only leave them unuſed, if they do not apply them at leaſt occaſionally in reflection, and in rational exerciſes of devotion at home, and do not readily turn them in company to important and uſeful matters, to ſuch as may render them wiſer and better; is it not real and pernicious loſs of time? Is it not a real loſs of the nobleſt powers, the beſt opportunities of becoming more perfect?

And certainly the caſe is the ſame with the other: that the too frequent uſe of ſocial pleaſures and diſſipations has a pernicious influence on the temper and turn of mind, and promotes levity.

We are indeed principally framed for joy, for the contented and chearful enjoyment of our exiſtence, and all the bounties of heaven, but not for levity; the former,

former, but not the latter, will and ſhould promote Wiſdom and Religion. Joy, real durable joy, is a ſerious thing; riſes on ſerious reflection and conſideration; is the fruit of a wiſe, a virtuous, and a pious heart, a heart that glows with love towards God and man: levity is the aſſaſſin of this joy.—Serioufneſs is not ſorrow; but neither is it a furious and riotous joy.—Levity is indeed not wickedneſs, not viciouſneſs; it is, however, but too frequently the conveyance to both.

And what more promotes this levity than the too frequent participation in ſocial pleaſures and diſſipations? It deadens the taſte for important concerns, for ſerious affairs; the taſte for ſilent reflections on God and oneſelf; the taſte for prayer, for meditation on the word of God, for all the exerciſes of devotion. By it a man grows accuſtomed to treat and regard every matter, however great or important it be,

no otherwiſe than as it may afford amuſement to himſelf or to others. He accuſtoms himſelf only to look upwards with a tranſient glance; not to remain firm; not to dwell upon any thing; not to fathom any thing; to talk of every thing, and to know little or nothing; to pronounce upon every thing, without having thoroughly ſifted any thing; always to put empty words in the room of ſentiments; or to ſtifle every ſentiment, as faſt as it ariſes, by preſſing another upon it, and, by a third, be it word, or look, or thought—immediately effacing every veſtige of both.

And if only by cheriſhing ſuch a levity it become paramount in the ſoul, will it have no pernicious influence on our frame and temper of mind? How can the doctrines of Wiſdom and Religion, that we occaſionally hear, make any ſtay with us, ſtrike their roots, and fructify? How can the Spirit ſoar upwards to GOD, its Creator and

and Author, have communion with him, and be happy in his company? How can the man arrive at ſelf-knowledge, feel the dignity of his nature, his ſuperior vocation, and qualify himſelf for that grand felicity? Are not all theſe quite foreign concerns, empty and unintelligible words, to the volatile and jovial, who live always in the noiſe of diſſipation? Yes; ſo long as a man flies from himſelf and quiet, avoids reflection, and reckons the day or the evening loſt which he paſſes for himſelf and his family at home; ſo long will he remain ignorant of theſe concerns, inſenſible to their value, and continue unfit for whatever is truly great, and makes man really happy. What ſolid reaſons for avoiding too frequent diſſipation, and for being temperate in the uſe even of the moſt innocent ſocial pleaſures!

Let it not be ſaid, that theſe maxims, theſe cautions, are detrimental to that

ſociableneſs which is the ground of all civil propriety, and which every man ought rather to encourage than prevent.

Far be it from me to prevent it! Sociableneſs is undoubtedly beautiful and good; and companies promote it, or might, however, promote it. A man learns in them better to underſtand and to eſteem himſelf; gets quit of many prejudices which men are apt to conceive againſt each other; will take notice of many good qualities and pre-eminences in perſons where he ſhould not have ſought them; will learn to judge of many things leſs from one ſide only, and therefore more juſtly; they promote mutual confidence; they form or ſmoothen the way to many buſineſſes and connections; a man may there often ſow ſeed of good ſentiments and actions; may cheriſh and ſtrengthen the generous virtues which are ſtealing into day, and in general may do much good.

But this is what every company does not effect; this is only effected by real virtuous company; and this is more rare than we commonly imagine. For that is not real, generous, Chriſtian company, where people only ſit together—often merely for the ſake of enjoying companionable pleaſures and paſtimes. Much leſs is that to be called company, where men come together for making a parade of their advantages above others; for caſting a ſhade upon others, for degrading them, for making them feel that they are leſs rich, leſs honoured, leſs beautiful; that they have leſs taſte and wit, leſs of the forms and addreſs of the world; when men come together for ſpying out each other's defects; for diſcovering their latent infirmities, and dragging them forth for ſcorn; luring them to reveal their ſmaller or greater ſecrets; amuſing oneſelf with their failings; abuſing their ſimplicity and openneſs of heart; or employing their

miſtakes and paſſions as inſtruments to our ſelfiſh views; or, when men come together, merely for coming together; for ſhunning the tedium of domeſtic quiet; for ſeeing and being ſeen; for trying ſome new trifling faſhion; or merely for being amuſed with empty paſtimes, in indolent repoſe.

No; that alone is real company, where men of benevolent affections come together in a uſeful way; forget all difference of fortune, ſtation, quality, condition, circumſtances, and perſonal diſtinctions; and, devoid of envy and jealouſy, the bitterneſs and ſpirit of party, a fondneſs for diſputation and deriſion, eſteem and honour all men as they find them, as brethren and as men; do each man juſtice; nor only juſtice, but tempered with indulgence, allow each to paſs for his full value, and unimpededly to manifeſt his particular gifts and powers; lend their ſtrength to the weak, their underſtanding to the ignorant;

rant; impart confidence to the timid, ſhew a better example to the faulty, and reciprocal ſenſations to the virtuous; rejoice with the merry, and lament with the mourner; make the bad which is ſeen or heard ſerve as a warning, the good for encouragement and example; cover and conceal the former, and acknowledge the latter with chearful applauſe. That is company which makes us wiſer and better.

That is, in fine, real and the beſt ſociableneſs, when men labour together with ſatisfaction and zeal for the good of ſociety; and this can as well, for the moſt part, be done at home, in one's calling, at one's buſineſs, or better, than by frequent intercourſe with others, ſolely for the ſake of pleaſure. The mother of a family, who takes upon herſelf the care and education of her children, and thus forms uſeful and valuable members of the ſtate, of the church, of the world, is not ſhe, though

living never ſo retiredly, far better diſcharging the duties of ſociety, than another who, regardleſs of her children, or neglectful of their education, is to be met with in every company, and can converſe moſt agreeably with all ſhe ſees?

Doubtleſs a man, under the greateſt appearance of ſociableneſs, may ſtill be unſociable; and, under all appearance of unſociableneſs, may be quite the reverſe. The former every one is, who ſeeks converſe and company for no other reaſon than becauſe he himſelf, his buſineſs, his children, his family, and quiet reflection, are burdenſome to him: the latter is every man, who truly fulfils the duties of his ſtation and calling, and applies his time and his abilities to the moſt uſeful purpoſe; but for that very reaſon he does not appear ſo often as the other in public or private aſſemblies, and lives more retired. The former ſeems to be actually ſociable, the latter

latter the abſolute reverſe; and yet it is not that man, but this, who really promotes the advantage of ſocial life, and complies to the full with the connections in which he ſtands towards his brethren. So little, therefore, does ſociableneſs conſiſt in an immoderate participation in ſocial pleaſures and amuſements, that it not unfrequently is hoſtile to it.

We might proceed much further, and yet not touch the extreme. As the generality of men and companies are framed, may not the exceſſive intercourſe they have together be far from advantageous to real ſociableneſs? For this to be, they muſt be productive of more knowledge and ſagacity, more taſte for what is true, beautiful, and good, more love towards God and man, more humility and modeſty, than they can now produce. Let the encouragement therefore of greater ſociableneſs be uſed by none as a pretext for making

ing loitering and idleneſs their main concern, for neglecting their time and their duties, and for continually purſuing the ſame round of diſſipation!

No! guard yourſelves from this too common abuſe of a matter, which in and of itſelf is innocent and good, but the abuſe whereof is ſo pernicious. Would you not have, ſooner or later, to lament over ſo many hours and days unthriftily thrown away, irrevocably loſt and gone? Would you ſave yourſelves from levity and its miſchievous effects, and ſo think and act as rational beings, as men formed for wiſdom, for virtue, and for immortality, ought to think and act; would you get a love for your duty and for domeſtic life, for the pleaſure and profit of ſilent reflection, for the refined comforts of pious exerciſes, and communion with GOD; oh! then, take advantage of the preſent ſeaſon, when you have fewer diſſipations and attractions

tractions to call off your thoughts from theſe objects. Try it at leaſt, but not only once or twice; make repeated attempts to ſee whether you cannot find a taſte for theſe things; whether you are not more placid, more ſatisfied with yourſelf, and the employment of your time and your talents; whether you do not think more comfortably on GOD, on the ends of your creation, on death, and on eternity; and if you find it ſo, then will you naturally for the future uſe greater moderation in regard to ſocial pleaſures and diverſions; ſet yourſelf ſeverer rules, more eaſily overcome all temptation to tranſgreſs them, and ſo learn to blend the duties of devotion and piety with the duties of ſociety, the pleaſures of home with the pleaſures of company, the pleaſures of the ſpirit with the pleaſures of ſenſe; and to uſe and to prize each according to its real value.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.